

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum

Harry Dursley was comfortably enjoying his last winning streak at Starcraft, because after all Zerg rush was born to win the day, when it happened.

He wasn't actually expecting something to happen, truth to be told he would have probably been better off with nothing happening at all, but life is life: can't control it. Not like his hair, that was a polished black color kept under control through the use of so much gel that it clearly wasn't healthy to touch it after sticking it together.

Super glue was just a bit higher in the degree of stickiness his hair was forced to attain to stay still and that after three to four hours (narratively speaking) in a hard and fierce battle with the tendrils of doom. His eyes were a striking green color, so much like those of his mother, his deceased mother. His surname had changed to Dursley after being adopted by his mother's sister and her husband, after the accident that had left him orphan.

He was grateful to them for it: when they had sat down and told him that his real family had died in a car accident, because of a truck driver dead drunk he had been angry at first, but they had reassured him kindly. They loved him as their own child, and everything was going to be the same as it had always been.

Vernon Dursley worked in a perfectly normal company, and Petunia Dursley was the most normal housewife there could ever be. They lived in a perfectly normal and average household that had a perfectly trimmed and normal garden, with normal neighbors and kids.

The only thing slightly less normal was that he was their adopted son instead of their real one, by the name of Harry James Dursley, but except for that, he was a perfectly normal soon to be eleven years old boy who played with his computer, averagely read books and watched television, and did his homework.

The event that happened shattered normality. That by itself was more than enough of a reason for Harry to hate it with unyielding fury and scorn...if he actually could muster said emotions at age eleven.

He wasn't the smartest light in the bunch, but it wasn't like he had thrown his head against the wall either. He was average: completely and utterly average in all terms of the way.

So when the event happened, he reacted in the most normal way ever: he called his parents.

"Mom! Dad!"

The boy yelled standing up from his seat and running downstairs, to the kitchen where his mother was currently stirring the broth for dinner and his father was reading the newspaper without problems.

"Come quick! There's an owl in my room!"

Said exclamation was probably not what his parents were expecting, but Petunia merely sighed with her shoulders slumping down.

The woman in question had dreaded this day: there was the chance, after all, but she had so much hoped it wasn't true at all. Petunia Dursley, once Evans, knew that there would be a chance for Harry to actually be...that. She didn't have to like it, but she had kind of hoped he would be normal, just like Vernon and herself. She had warned Vernon of course, and he had merely laughed at her. Magic? Like it could just exist something that needed but a frilly wooden stick to make things different.

"Better call the Animal Protection."

Vernon was quick in his thinking as he stood up from his seat, folding the newspaper. The recent article concerning America's politics was all but rubbish, but an owl was far worse. "First though I'll try and get it out of the house... since when are there owls at Private Drive?" The man was disbelieving, but he trusted his son to say the truth. If he said there was an owl in his room, then it had probably entered from an open window. "Must be the global warming: sends migratory birds haywire probably." He of course didn't know that owls were anything but migratory: still it was a perfectly normal suggestion.

"You closed the window Harry?"

He asked as he began to climb upstairs.

"No dad! You think she flew out already?"

"Better hope it. Your mother's going to throw a fit if she has to clean your room again..."

He shivered as Harry did too: Petunia and cleaning were some sort of compulsory symbiotic relation. Where there was cleaning there was Petunia, and viceversa. The springtime cleaning was the most dreaded event in the entire household. To fight it off both he and his father would grab their fishing rods and ride off towards a nearby lake: camping out in the air, fighting off bears...far better than having to live in the same house as Mrs Dursley during springtime cleaning.

If the duo had tried to be more reasonable, they would have realized by then that Petunia Dursley hadn't actually been the first in line to screech at the event. In truth, she had been perfectly quiet, her shoulders slightly tensing as she sat down on the nearby chair in the kitchen, waiting for the noise to reach her ears.

It took a moment, but then the woman heard the rumbling down the stairs of both Vernon and Harry, both running like thief caught on the act as a majestic brown owl flew down behind them, landing with a soft thud on the table.

In front of her.

Because, clearly, she was the most apt at dealing with the event.

Vernon and Harry stood in a corner, eying quietly the scene that was now playing in front of them. On one side, Petunia was merely displaying a light frown, her eyes fixed with those of the owl in question, one of those big owls that just begs and screams to be called 'Barnabus' or 'Gruff'. The owl for his side was eying with a bit of boredom the woman, before it slowly morphed into a light nervous and seedy anger. He was here to deliver a message, so why was the woman, whom the message was addressed to, didn't want to take it?

"Harry." Petunia pointed out, "No murdering owls."

Sheepishly, the boy gently left on the ground the walking cane of his grandfather from his father's side. It was in the cupboard, together

with a good load of other junk, and he had moved right over there to grab something useful to...knock out the owl.

The owl hooted once, his golden eyes narrowing on Petunia who returned a gruff snort.

"Fine." She muttered, rolling her eyes. "Hand it over."

Two cheerful hoots escaped the owl's beak, as his face if possible by the beast's nature morphed into a happy one, before dropping from within one of his wings a letter. A few clicks of the tongue later, and owl flew over to the top of the fridge, in wait.

"My lovely Flower...there's an owl nesting on our fridge." Vernon's statement was all that it took to make Petunia gather enough courage to open the letter and start reading it.

Quietly, the two males of the household looked towards the housewife, ignoring the fact that the broth was probably going to end up soggy if nobody was going to turn it around. Her face began to pale, her lips to compress like she had just been drinking the sourest of lemons, and there was some sort of fury in her eyes that reminded Vernon of that time she had thought he was cheating on her: he hadn't walked straight for five days later on.

"Harry James Dursley." Petunia hissed, "Go to your room."

"Mom?" He queried, only for her to snap back outright.

"Now!"

Harry didn't need to be told again: with a jolt he was already running upstairs, closing the door behind him as fast as he could. Taking quick breaths to get back his cool, he waited for the eventual raising of voices that followed the usual fight between his mother and his father: the problem was that neither of the two actually began to yell.

It was time for dinner when his mother entered his room, quietly followed by his father, both having the same face of one who has eaten something truly disgusting. Petunia was fidgeting with her hands, while Vernon positively red from the effort of keeping his rage compressed.

"Harry." Petunia began slowly, "You will not be going to Smeltings this year."

"Mom?" The boy asked perplexed. What was this about? They had been positively thrilled that he had more than good grades to enter such a prestigious, close by with commute, easy to graduate school that...telling him he wouldn't be going was leaving him speechless.

"Is there...a reason?"

"Harry...You know we love you no matter what," Petunia kept on saying, "But..."

The words simply didn't want to come out of Mrs. Dursley, who began to sob in her handkerchief. It was Vernon who spoke in her place.

"Well boy: it appears you're a wizard."

"What?"

"A wizard."

"Repeat that."

"A Wiz-ard."

"First of April already passed father."

"Harry...it's true." Petunia spluttered out between tears, "Your parents...they were both wizards."

"You're joking right? This is such a funny joke it..." but the words died in Harry's throat, as he saw both looks of seriousness, pity and mostly...regret, in his parent's faces.

"You're not joking." He stated, before slumping down to sit on the chair near him. His fists clenched and distended, as he muttered with a voice filled with disbelief, "I'm...magical?"

"Well...yes." Vernon grumbled, "We had our hopes you weren't, mind you, but..."

"But what!?" He basically screeched, "I'm a Wizard!? What the hell does that mean!?"

"Harry James Dursley! Mind your language!" Petunia snapped, seemingly having emerged from her shock because of those crude terms.

"But if you are a wizard..." Vernon added quietly, "Then you must know the truth about your parents."

"What? They were wizards too right? They died in a car accident...no. Wait a moment...you aren't telling me they..."

"They were killed by a really dark and evil Wizard." Vernon spoke slowly, "The man who brought you to us said his name was 'Voldemort', he killed your parents, and you had to be brought to safety here."

"Why?" His throat felt constricted as the question emerged from his lips, but it was Petunia who answered that question.

"Harry...my sister married a man, your father, by the name of Potter. The wizard who brought you to us said that this 'Voldemort' was some sort of freak magic Nazi who wanted nothing more than to kill all non-magic persons...obviously a lot of wizards didn't agree, and Potter was among them. You were brought to safety just in time...or he would have killed you too."

It sounded...so cliché: a big bad guy inherently evil because the plot said so that decided to play the slaughterer of the family of the young dramatic hero.

"So...is that man still at large?" He asked, a sick feeling settling in his stomach.

"No." Petunia whispered back with a bit of relief, and some sort of happiness mixed into the words, "He was finally caught and killed, and his cult disbanded. Still...you're magical. That means you will have to attend a magical school...the letter I received came from an old...acquaintance, who warned me they will be coming tomorrow afternoon to pick you up and help you take care of the stuff you need to buy."

"So...I'm going to a wizard school?"

He slumped his shoulders slightly, his eyes downcast as he looked with an out of normalcy curiosity at the carpet.

"Don't worry Harry..." Petunia began gently, "Whatever happens, you'll always be our precious little boy." With that said the woman gently grabbed Harry's cheeks with her hands and gave him a kiss on the forehead.

"Well boy, at least think positive: your other parents apparently issued a trust fund for you to pay for your tuition...I'll try and get the Smelting office to get the money back, but worst to worst no harm...extra harm, is done." The man visibly put up a light smile, trying to brighten up a situation that appeared anything but that.

"So...I'll be a wizard." Harry murmured once more.

"Well, if I remember right, my sister could do this really cool magic to repair broken stuff." Petunia smiled lightly, "But...Harry? I want you to promise me one thing..."

"You want me to repair stuff that breaks up?" He queried back immediately, kind of wondering why his mother was always on the practical term and couldn't recall magic doing...something else than repairing broken stuff.

"That too," Petunia admitted quickly, "But I want you to promise me this: no matter what you will learn or do...please don't let its power get to your head."

"From great power, comes great responsibility." He nodded sagely. Spider-man was a life-savior.

"Do I have your word Harry?"

"Of course mom! I'll still be me...you think I can fly with magic?" He asked now positively more excited, only for Petunia to sigh.

"I don't know. Severus will come by tomorrow to take care of your expenses, till then..." That was when the faint smell of burned stuff reached their nostrils, making Petunia wide eyed.

"Oh my...the broth!" Rushing downstairs, Vernon was soon left alone staring at Harry.

The boy looked at his father with perplexity, and the man looked back at him with a serious face. It was only a gaze, but it was all that was needed to convey a very perfect message to the boy's brain.

'Be good. Make me proud. For the love of God don't make your mother worry.'

As his father too left, Harry turned around on his chair, closed Starcraft and opened up the web browser for Internet Explorer.

"Well." He muttered cracking his fingers. "Let the magic research begin."

He was average, alright...but that didn't mean he had to do the stupid thing and wait for someone else to come knocking at his door to explain stuff.

Author's notes.

A bad habit of mine is to write a story while I'm working on another story to 'unleash' the pent-up frustration and plot bunnies. (For the HP community, don't you worry: I'm talking to those who follow me up from the Naruto community)

Of course, after a couple of readings and much more, I ended up tackling yet another 'colossus' of the fanfic community.

Harry Potter.

So...I present to thee Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Conundrum.

Wiki definition of Conundrum:

A riddle whose answer is or involves a pun or unexpected twist.

A logical postulation that evades resolution, an intricate and difficult problem.

Needless to say that there isn't a clear definition of what this story 'is'.

I can say what this story isn't about though:

This isn't about flinging spells without thinking.

This isn't about overthinking/planning/making magical swearing oaths pop up from nowhere.

This isn't about changing things to become 'something else' but more about bringing the 'something else' within.

This isn't about painting one evil to boot and another good to boot.

This isn't about bashing one character or the other.

Now, for what this story contains...or will contain...

Lies. First off, I do not want to 'paranoia' you to oblivion, but remember that what one says and what one thinks, what one does and how he acts, are different things.

For example, in this chapter Petunia is saying that Voldemort is a 'Magic Nazi'. Of course it's her opinion. Dumbledore would have said everything about 'blood purism' and the likes, but Petunia's a muggle, and thus she knows what she has been told, and her ideas come from that.

If the summary hasn't helped you discern some stuff, I can't go out of the way and 'spoil' the rest.

I can only swear that I am up to no normality.

...

Which isn't all reassuring, but it will have to do for the time being.

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 2

Harry nervously paced in front of the door for a moment, before deciding on the stupidity of waiting an entire morning for a wizard, of all things, to knock at the door. If half the things he had read on the internet were to be considered true, then it was probably a miracle the 'wizard Nazi' named Voldemort hadn't destroyed everything. Albeit considering most of the 'magic', removing the show that his mother insisted were just tricks, resumed to satanistic rituals to conjuring demons and devils alike, then maybe that wasn't quite the same magic he was going to learn.

Unless his parents were secretly believers of Satan.

Petunia was kind of fussing in the kitchen, feeling the need to compulsively clean everything near her, even Vernon's face as long as it distracted her. Vernon was instead reading his newspaper, albeit it was the newspaper of the day before, since the new one had been cleaned when Petunia had decided the porch needed a good scrubbing.

He'd be lying if he said he wasn't being excited about the wizard that was meant to come. He had tried to get more information on this 'Severus' character, but except for him having grown up near his mother's family, he hadn't learned much more.

Well, except knowing that he was some sort of 'self-centered narcissistic individual with greasy hair'. That had brought forth the question of how a narcissist could at the same time have unkempt hair, and from there his mother had begun cleaning in silence. Harry half-supposed she was still being angry at him for having pointed out that flaw in the string of quiet curses.

Still, his breakfast was swishing around his stomach clearly hinting at the nervousness of his, and he was kind of hoping something, anything, would bring this situation to a stop. Renouncing the stupid theory of staying there until lunch, since it was clear that the man had to arrive in the afternoon and he would clearly not be there until hours later, he decided to head back upstairs.

Of course it was just as he had finally reached his room that yet another owl decided to fly by, and stop perched outside his window, looking at him.

"Is this going to be something common around here now?" He asked skeptically, as the owl merely hooted back bobbing her head in such a way that...well, 'cute' could be a term he supposed, considering it made a sort of beak-smile while doing the hoot.

It was a white feather bird with golden eyes, and attached to its paw was a small parchment that the owl kindly presented to him.

He opened the slip of parchment without fussing, reading it with curiosity.

Hello cousin!

My name is Lillian Potter, and my mother told me you will be going off to the school of Hogwarts too! We'll be in the same year, and since she kind of gave me your address, I thought 'Why not owl him?' from what I was told you grew up with muggles, that is people without magic, so maybe you'd like to have someone to write to and ask questions about magic.

I just can't wait to hear from you! Oh right, the owl's name is Hedwig, she's such a beauty isn't she?

Just write something back and send it off with her, don't worry...she's magical too!

Write back to me soon,

L.P.

Now a normal individual might have queried just how an owl could fly like she had a Gps inserted within it, but a normal and average individual would instead do something else. There was just one thing that caught Harry's interest in the entire ordeal: he had relatives. Magic relatives. So why did they send him to the Dursley?

Better yet, why did they send him to the Dursley when they could have dropped him off to...this cousin's mother? If they didn't have space for him, which could have been kind of understandable after all, then why not at least try and write to him sooner? Were they waiting for him to display 'magic' of sorts?

Unless...maybe his father had a sister, or a brother. Then they married someone else and had this 'Lillian'. Magic Nazi came around and killed them, leaving thus only Lillian and her mother, and so of course they wouldn't have been able to care also for him.

He knew what a mess of a child he had been...as his mother kept on rambling about the chaos that ensued one day out of seven in the household when he was little, every time she was angry it kind of became a 'history of how she put up with him as a baby'...he loved her too of course.

"Well...I'll grab a pen." He murmured to the owl, who hooted once more. He kind of hoped there wouldn't be 'gifts' in the form of dead rats later on: he wasn't going to like having his mother scream at him for said...disgusting...atrocities.

A ball-pen found later, and a quick message was written back.

Hello. I'm Harry Dursley and yes...I kind of wanted to know more in general about magic.

Specifically, what is it? Ritualistic? Wand? Conjuring fire with the hands? Spending 'Mana'? Trying to access some sort of pseudo-fantasy field? And what can one do with magic?

Do all wizards write with owls and parchment? Don't they use cellphones or things like that?

Hope to hear from you soon,

H.D.

Well, this was more of a telephone call reply than a letter, but it would have to do. He closed it off and placed it back on the owl's leg, which...purred, for a second, before flying off towards the sky.

"...the world is going mad." He muttered shaking his head, before turning to his computer. "Diablo, save me from those who'd wish me harm..."

The afternoon came as swiftly as it was meant to be, and soon he was once more standing in front of the door that led to outside, nervously in wait. When a knock was heard, it took all of his

patience and composure not to outright slam it open. He still had to make sure of who was on the other side after all. A stern looking man with dark black hair and eyes, dressed in an apparently rich and tailored dark green suit with a bright green tie. That didn't help at all considering he was holding a walking stick and appeared to be drilling a murderous gaze through the peep-hole of the door.

Gulping down nervously, he cautiously opened the door completely.

"Harry Dursley?" The man's question came after a brief moment of silence, in which both looked at each other's eyes with something akin of a thousand questions being asked in the midst of their gaze war. Things like 'Are you a teacher' or 'Are you a wizard' or 'Are you here to help me' or 'Can you explain'. They all passed and skimmed through Harry's head one after the other and they all received their answers by the boy himself, in the oldest form of colloquial exchange ever to be born: that of self-countering one's own thesis in order to avoid embarrassing oneself.

"Yes sir." He squeaked out visibly embarrassed that this was the height of his communication capacity. He looked back towards the kitchen, where Petunia had slowly started to stop cleaning and put things back in their places.

"I am Severus Snape." The man brought forward his right hand, and Harry grabbed it with his own like a lion that was hungry for food, only in his case it was because he didn't want to appear rude. It was a wizard for heaven's sakes! Could he read mind? Could he destroy things, cast fireballs, call forth thunderstorms? Did he have some sort of walking cane plus five of destruction somewhere?

"You will find that the best questions are those actually asked Mr. Dursley." The raven haired man remarked curtly, displaying a slightly annoyed face.

"Would you like to come in Sir?" He finally relented, having found something polite to say as he moved out of the way.

"Of course...Petunia." The man made a stiff and curt gesture with his head towards Harry's mother, before locking his gaze with the Dursley family patriarch. "Vernon."

How a single word, a proper name even, could become an insult was a mystery. Still it appeared as if Severus had mastered the art of insulting people while not insulting them, because it worked pretty well. Harry's father's face turned a beet red, probably due to some old wounds between the two, probably. The boy had no idea what might have brought forward such resentment, but it was Petunia who stopped the argument from becoming something unpleasant.

"Please." She muttered her lips thinly pressed one against the other in an effort to keep her mouth shut, "Let bygones be bygones: Severus, would you like a cup of tea?" Her voice betrayed the light hidden dread within the intent she had. She didn't want a fight in the middle of the hallway, and she certainly did her worst to hide the lingering fear that the wizard could indeed come to grab his magic and use it against Vernon.

Harry waited, his breath stuck deep within his throat hoping that nothing came to pass from said confrontation that clearly held deeper roots than he could think of.

The silence stretched uncomfortably for a couple of minutes that seemed hours, before it finally gave way to a light and curt shaking of the man's head.

"I will be bringing your son to Diagon's Alley to buy what he needs for Hogwarts. He will be back before dinner." With that mentioned, he turned and eyed Harry with a barely concealed glare. "Do be quick in following me."

The man walked outside without another word, standing in wait for him apparently, to follow. He looked for comfort at both of his parents, but while his father grumbled curses his mother looked at him with her eyes darting towards Severus. The silent plea was for him to move and follow the man, and so follow he did after grabbing his coat and putting on his gloves.

"Do grab a hold of my walking stick." Severus remarked drily, pushing towards him the wooden side of the stick. "I don't have all day Mr. Dursley." He added as soon as he saw that Harry didn't appear to be obeying.

The boy took a moment more of thinking, before finally complying and grabbing a hold of the stick with his hand. The next moment a

strange and tweezing sensation encompassed the entire frame of the boy's body, before loud sickening pops echoed harmfully in his ears, finalized by him apparently hurling and twisting around himself before landing with a sickening thud on the cold ground of an alley.

"The first apparition is always the most problematic." Snape stated with a sort of bemused tone, because of course he couldn't be a bit helpful.

"Let the faults of the father fall upon the son." Harry hissed as he slowly stood back up, earning himself a raised eyebrow from Severus, "What the hell did my father do to you? You nearly..."

"Language Mr. Dursley, language." Severus remarked looking straight at him before slightly turning and starting to walk once more. The alley appeared a veritable crowded mess of people, but as Harry followed in fear of losing his sole 'known' wizard in the place he found himself realizing how much was different from a normal crowded alley.

For one thing, everyone was clad in robes or stuff that came out from the middle age or the nineteenth century, for seconds there were a wide variety of...things, strange things that made his throat itch in curiosity. He had so many questions he wanted to ask, but he thought better than to do so. There was just something in the way Severus barely tolerated his presence that made him actually think against asking. Sure, the best questions are those asked...but the better ones are those which you answer by yourself.

'Is that a floating broom? Yes it is.'

'Are those Love potions? The label says so.'

'Is that a bank called Gringotts? That does seem our destination.'

He carefully avoided mentioning anything concerning the two 'tin-cans' standing on guard outside of the bank. He had half an idea of asking if someone had seen a Dwarven Defender being all 'canny' with them, but refrained. The small smile on his lips remained however, and he had to stifle a giggle that menaced to escape his throat.

He didn't need a heavy knowledge of magic or wizardry to know that these things were goblins: small, grumpy and with strange ears and a strange skin color...unless they actually were dwarves. In which case he just hoped they'd understand that 'dwarves' referred to bearded person fighting off orcs and Sauron's lackeys.

"We would like to access Mr. Harry Dursley's trust fund for the first year of school." Severus' hand reached within his other sleeve, removing from it a small golden key and handing it over to the goblin/dwarf who took it with a sneer. That sneer appeared to be some sort of genetical trait, since a quick looking around revealed it was the very same face most of the other goblins wore.

Someone had to have forgotten to randomize the facial expressions. He mentally thanked himself for having finally decided to use sarcasm or humor to try and weasel out of the stress and nervousness he was in.

The goblin disappeared behind a pair of heavy metallic doors, before marching back in a few moments later with a small metallic box. Opening it straight in front of them, two small pouches were produced.

"Here you go: one hundred Galleons, fifty seven Sickles and eighty-nine Knuts. The galleons are set apart from the rest." Severus merely nodded, grabbing both pouches and handing them over to the boy in question, who took them with a mixture of perplexity and nervousness.

"Hold on to them, boy." The man muttered, while taking back the key and making it disappear into his sleeve once more. "Now follow me...we are going to get you a wand."

With those words...was it normal for him to feel the pure unwashed feeling of dread loom over his soul?

Maybe...maybe he was still in time to make a run for it? If only he knew where he was and how to 'disappear' that is.

If only...

He vowed to himself quietly, as he followed the quickly walking man that was his guide, that he would never, ever, end up in a situation

like that without at least an escape route ready: his heart wouldn't be able to take any of this a second time!

Author's notes

We move towards the Wand.

As you can read, no 'trolley-running' and no 'Hagrid'. And as always, everything written is thoroughly 'biased' by the opinion of who is currently speaking/seeing the scene.

For things 'that have to come' no need to ask questions. All will be explained. Maybe.

Eventually.

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 3

Mr. Ollivander was the only wand-maker of Diagon alley and also the only official wand seller of all of Great Britain's wizards and sorceress. Harry hadn't asked why a wand was needed, but now he could accurately pin-point that this type of 'magic' was something of the sorts of the 'abracadabra' variety, with the need for a wand: it kind of made sense, since the wand-magic type was the oldest known.

The man was tall and lean, looking with curiosity at the boy's arrival, before mumbling something incoherent about strangeness and bizarreness in the magic around. Nevertheless, he moved closer to Harry with a meter roll, and made a small sincere smile.

"Mr. Snape, 13 and $\frac{3}{4}$ inches, birch with a core of Dragon Heartstring," the man stated while looking at the boy's guide, before turning his full attention towards Harry. "Your wand hand?"

"The right?" He hesitated: he wrote with his right hand, so it was probably the same hand used after all. Ollivander merely nodded curtly, before starting to measure his arm length and then heading off to grab a shoe-box that instead contained a wand.

"Please hold onto it and try and move it."

For once, he felt kind of silly in grabbing the handle of the wand and starting to move it around, considering that nothing happened, Ollivander took it back and moved once more to get another one. This process repeated itself a couple of times, until in the end the man narrowed his eyes for but a second, before murmuring.

"Could it be? Wait here a second Mr. Dursley." With that said, he headed off towards the back of the store, and returned a couple of minutes later with a simple looking fourteen inches wand made of black wood. Slowly he grabbed the hilt of the wand, and something, deep within it, stirred and moved cautiously around. Somehow, strange sparks of a dark blue color erupted from the tip of the wand, and that made Ollivander smile slightly.

"How curious...I thought I'd never sell this wand and here I am mistaken." He added, "Fourteen Inches, Gaboon Ebony, with a magical core made from the shroud of a Dementor tied together by

Thestral hair...if there was a dark wand to be called such, this would be one." He spoke slowly, and with those words Harry felt a lump form in the back of his stomach. A 'Dark' wand? Well, it was a polished jet-black color, but the way it was told, it appeared it held something else.

"Oh do not worry," Ollivander added looking at the boy with a light grin, "I have sold wands made of Unicorn hair to people who became the cruelest of wizards, and cores of darkness that were used for the greater good. The wand chooses the wizard, Mr. Dursley, but it is the wizard that chooses how to use the wand."

The old topic of 'you are what you decide to be' wasn't lost to his ears: a lot of games hinged on that plot, but still...he'd better keep what Ollivander told him secret. It wouldn't make for a good conversation starter, saying that his wand was...made of strange and dark stuff.

"It will be seven Galleons." The man added a few moments later, and as Harry paid him he whispered a final warning. "To be able to use such a wand, Mr. Dursley, you must be determined. Gaboon Ebony is a strong-willed type of wood, and due to its size and core it will not take well to...weak willed individuals. The Dementor shroud is a rarely if ever used type of core, but it is the one you resonate the most with, maybe you had an encounter with one? In any event, the Thestral hair is tricky too...you will have a hard time with that wand Mr. Dursley...But any spell you will master will be something to gape at."

"I...I think I understand," he replied back, albeit having no clue at all of what the man was talking about. Did wands have wills too? Was that going to mean that he now had to be careful of the walls because everything was alive?

"I doubt you do, Mr. Dursley...I doubt you do." The wand maker murmured, "Many do not understand what I tell them until later. Still I've held you long enough: the wand, while important, is not the only thing that makes a wizard." With those words Severus took the cue to pay for the wand, excuse them and the rest of the visit to Diagon alley passed briskly and quickly. So fast that Harry didn't even have the time to mull over the thoughts of what the man had told him. Him, destined to greatness? He wasn't actually great! As if...He'd probably end up average, as always.

"I suggest you start reading your school books now," Severus finally decided to speak as the two were headed towards the end of the alley. "You will find that the Potion Master of Hogwarts is a demanding individual."

"Yes sir." He replied, before finally gathering the courage to ask the following question, "Sir...what are the lessons about at Hogwarts?"

Severus raised an eyebrow, before replying curtly.

"There is Potions, Defense against the Dark Arts, Charms, Transfiguration, History of Magic, Herbology, that worthless course that is Flying and Astronomy, Mr. Dursley."

"Flying?" He asked, vividly interested in the nearly last one considering the man held it to such distaste.

"Indeed. On broomsticks. Quidditch is a practiced sport at Hogwarts, but I will not explain to you the rules of such barbaric typology of game."

Well...someone appeared to be the anti-sports type. Somehow Harry could relate to that too: why go outside and waste your time when you can do more constructive things inside? Like...grinding while looking for the Cow Level in Diablo?

"I understand sir," he replied quietly. The silence around the two stretched uncomfortably for quite a long time, until they finally reached the end of the alley, where Severus once more asked him to grab the walking cane. A few seconds later, they were gone back to the front door of Privet Drive. The stuff bought had all been shrunk down to merely the size of a card box, and was simply standing within a normal looking pouch.

"Mr. Dursley, we will see each other again at Hogwarts...remember my words." With that curt salute, the man disappeared into nothingness. So...teleportation?

"Wizards can teleport." He muttered, before shaking his head, "Maybe I should try and use the dungeon and dragons spell book...who knows, might even work."

Harry rung the bell of the door, and then waited for a few minutes. The time his mother needed to come to the door and open it, he was already half fantasizing about the things he could do...and once he hit the road of magic, the second question that subtly pushed itself forward was but one and one alone: would he excel at that, or would he keep on being average like in school?

He had his answer ready, as he kept a terribly enormous grin on his face while moving upstairs, after a quick relay of how the day had gone. Opening the potion book proved to be easy: the tome appeared to have been handwritten, with a quill none the less considering the ink stains. The first few pages were the usual boring things concerning the need of precautions, the correct usage of a copper cauldron, and the type of gloves they had to have when cleaning the cauldron's interior.

He had until the first of September after all...he would learn and maybe, for once, he'd be something different from average.

At the fifth page, however, the determination he had shown began to waver. Deciding to stop for a quick break, he pushed the button of his computer to turn it on.

The next instant, static was all that his monitor showed, forcing him to raise an eyebrow in surprise. He pushed the button of the power again to turn the computer off, and then pushed it once more to turn it on. The static remained, and so he stood up from his chair, trying to get the manual for the computer. As he moved further away, the static disappeared to leave place to the loading screen of Windows.

He raised an eyebrow in surprise, since it was actually...kind of like what happened with magnets.

Harry moved closer, and the static returned. So he moved backwards, and the static left. Looking down to his pouch, considering that was the only thing different, he dropped it on his bed and then moved closer. Once more, the static returned. Berating himself after some quick thinking, he dropped the wand too on the bed before moving closer again.

This time no static appeared, and smiling to himself for having understood another thing of magic, he logged in on his account.

So magic and technology hated each other: that could be an interesting concept to explore, kind of like with Arcanum, of Steamwork and Magick Obscura. Few minutes later an owl hooted to him outside his window. He groaned as he stood up, leaving the Zergs to do their stuff. He was pretty sure whatever the reply was going to be, it would be better than seeing a space marine horde try and kill his unyielding army of doom.

Hello!

I received your owl and wrote back just as fast as I could! Well, we use wands to do magic (duh!) and I don't know what this 'mana' is, but my mother told me that magic cores in wands are what make the magic happen. With magic you can do a lot of things (you should read your books for the first year, I'm doing it too!) Anyway we don't have cellphones: I asked mom and she said that magic and technology don't work well together. Hogwarts itself will fry anything technologic, so she told me to tell you that if you have a 'cellphone' not to bring it. Even a...'digital watch' is not going to work.

You know, with the amount of questions you're asking me, you'll end up in Ravenclaw with little doubt...me I suppose I'm going to end up in Gryffindor: my parents were both in there.

Oh right! You grew with muggles so you don't know: there are four houses in Hogwarts. Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff and Slytherin. The first one is for the brave of heart, the second is for the smart, the third is generally for the good natured and the fourth is for the twisted and the cunning...but if you end up in there we can still be friends! It's not a liked house really: my mom's been telling me all the bad guys in history came from there!

Well, can you tell me a bit more about cellphones and 'digital' clocks?

Write back to me soon,

L.P.

He frowned slightly at the parchment, before sighing: well, magic knowledge for technology knowledge...and magic hated technology and vice-versa...

This was both interesting and worrying. He replied quite quickly, especially because the owl was starting to take branches from nearby trees to make a nest by his window: something subtle to tell him that she wouldn't leave without a reply...

She was kind of bossy now that he thought about that.

"Alright. Let's get this over with." He murmured, before delving into a quick Wikipedia definition of 'cellphone' and 'digital clocks', printing the resulting pages, folding them neatly and then attaching them to his own letter on what 'Internet' and 'Wikipedia' was.

With a snort, he moved on to the Charms books: the standard Book of Spells, Grade One, by Miranda Goshawk. He bit his lip for a second, before moving to grab the book on the Defense against the Dark Arts. The distinction now was made clear: Charms were utilitarian spells, kind of like every day usage to make life easier. Curses were the destroyers, the sort of thing you expect from a Mage from a dungeon. He understood now what Ollivander meant: his wand wasn't made to light up fire for camping, it was made to burn down a forest.

An emotion began to flourish in his stomach, one of elicited hilarity, at the same time as a feeling of dread washed over him. The wand was difficult to master. This was not as easy as the books portrayed the incantations to be. There could be thousands of different things that could go wrong if he tried this at home...and if he did, and if it actually worked...he might kill someone.

The wand was a gun. A gun that could do cool tricks, but a gun nevertheless.

From great power, comes great responsibility...Spiderman, why the hell did you have to be his conscience?

It was with the utmost reverence that he quietly put his magic books in a corner, and it was with a sort of calm fear that he grabbed a hold of his wand once more. He sat down, gently letting his hand move through the lines of the wood of the wand, feeling the handle in his right palm fit perfectly. It really did seem that the wand suited him.

Yet, what did this mean? This was just power. No, not even power: this was just a fledgling of a power to be...if he trained it. If he didn't, he would have nothing at all.

Quite clearly...he didn't know what to do.

A soft knocking at the door brought him out of his meditation, if he could have called it that. His mother was warily looking at him, trying a smile.

"Dinner's ready Harry."

"Thanks mom! I'm coming right up!" Scrambling to his feet to reach for the door, he didn't realize it, but a faint wisp of smoke had been escaping the tip of his wand while his eyes had been closed. It twirled in the air of the room for a moment, before being snuffed out by some sort of invisible force.

"...Master..." A voice whispered in the room, as the computer's static suddenly reappeared for but a second, before disappearing once more.

Author's notes

And the wand is chosen.

I finally looked up the difference between charms, jinxes, hexes and curses. In the end a powered charm kills just as much as a curse. Actually the line is kind of blurred: some 'charms' are outright offensive spells.

Another note: the games that will be spoken of or quoted are unluckily 1998 years or still...not 1991. So, for quoting purposes, do consider the games as 'come out' earlier. This is an average Harry who thus had an average life with 'geeky' side. (Considering the Dursley well-off, instead of an outright spoiled Harry, there is a 'slightly less active, more nerdy' kid, since computers costs were quite a bit steep at the time)

Yet the last note: The Elder Wand was made with a core of pure Thestral Hair. This wand has a core of Dementor Shroud and the Hair is there only as a secondary addition.

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 4

It was with half closed eyes that Harry Dursley woke up at the glaring sound of the alarm clock. His stuff had all been packed the night before, and his wand stood quietly on his bed desk, right next to his glasses. He hadn't tried any spells, considering the clear labeled warnings he had actually found after turning a few more pages of the Transfiguration book. He hadn't read all of the school books, but he had some sort of insight on how things worked now.

First off, the wand had to move in specific and outright embarrassing movements to work. Secondly, the spell name had to be enunciated with the correct pronunciation. Thirdly, he had to fight his own embarrassment to actually say or do anything.

It was just...embarrassing.

How could some people simply do it in front of others? He groaned as he got washed and dressed up in his normal clothes. He had to reach for the station and the binary 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ before eleven o'clock. Meaning that from where he lived with his family, he had to catch the train at the station quite early.

He had agreed to meet with his cousin outside of the train after all, and it wouldn't do to make her wait: at least he wasn't going to be completely alone in this sort of strange voyage. If he hadn't seen Diagon Alley, he'd have begun thinking it was all a rather strange ploy or scam, but after having teleported from his lawn to a strange looking alley his beliefs had taken a complete change.

Magic existed, end of the argument.

Vernon was rolling his eyes at his wife, who was tearing up for 'the departure of her little Harry', when he went down for breakfast. Two hundred, at least, warnings on what to do and what not to do and he was off with his father to catch the train.

"Strange means of travel, by train..." Vernon muttered, as his car took to the highway to get there faster. "You think they also have flying carpets?"

"I think they do." Harry replied, "But I think the train's faster."

"While you're at it, be on the lookout for anything that could help make the work go faster...you know; maybe some magic drilling?"

He nodded, humming his approval before turning to look out of the window. The highway had appeared completely clear moments before, and yet now it was practically filled with cars. There were kind of going to arrive early as it was, so he didn't worry.

He'd have all the time in the world to get to the train in the end: luckily Lillian had told him where to find the train track. Who'd have ever thought about walking straight through a stone pillar to enter a magical station?

In the end, they were lucky they had left so soon, because in a few minutes the traffic reached unparalleled heights of congestion, forcing them to a crawl and to reach the train station with only mere minutes to go. Harry couldn't even wave goodbye to his father, as he rushed off with his bags.

As it was, it was just sheer luck that he managed to get into a compartment on the train towards Hogwarts: probably the train itself had sensed him and had opened the doors at the bottom compartment for him to enter...it could pretty much be the case considering 'magic'.

As it was, he collapsed into a heap of sweat and heavy panting in the outright last compartment, completely empty because sane people always move up to get to the first ones, leaving the last ones empty.

The train was a sort of old looking one with leather seats and easily opened windows: considering it went by coal if the thick wisps of black smoke were of any indication, there clearly was not going to be a problem with high speed.

It was to his surprise that the train entered a tunnel, only to emerge a split second later on a really old and high above railway system that apparently was in the middle of nowhere: only green lush grass all around, with a bright blue sky above.

The middle of nowhere after a few minutes: magic.

"Once you remove the impossible...try replying with magic?" He murmured to himself, as he began to change his clothes with the magical robes: better to have them on earlier, with no-one in sight, than later on with people fussing to descend.

As an added bonus, the robes were pretty much cooler than the clothes he had been sweating in.

Taking out from his trunk the book on potions, he slowly began to read its pages, trying to ignore the gut wrenching feeling that he felt like a stick in the middle of an ocean. The stress of getting there late had made him worried about missing the train, and because of that he hadn't even managed to meet up with Lillian or her parents. He had fantasized about hearing from them about his own father, but as it was it appeared it would have to wait.

Maybe he should have looked out for Lillian on the train?

Shaking his head, he turned to the page about Bezoars' disgusting properties of appearing into the stomach of sheep: he'd never look at a lamb in the same way afterwards, if it meant that their meat could also contain 'chunks' of a magical stone that could pretty much heal any poison.

How one 'ingested' a stone as big as a punch was a mystery, but then again...

"Magic."

He sighed: at least the train ride had given him the time to bring himself up to speed with a couple more chapters.

"All students: please change your attires to your school robes." A voice actually buzzed through the compartments, likely an intercom...

"Oh right: magic kills technology...so this is more magic." Harry muttered once more. Why was he speaking to himself to begin with?

He knew the answer of course: he was being alone for the first time in a long time, and he was going to a boarding school; a school were people like nerds, bullies, know-it-all, studious people and the likes existed, but that was magical, far away from his family, and that

probably would see him become the most average wizard in existence.

Super powerful wand or not, he highly doubted he'd get anywhere anytime soon. So, when the train began to slow down, he exited his compartment.

"Leave your belongings in the wagons: we will take them for you." The voice once more ringed throughout the train, and finally, after a long six hour trip where he hadn't been disturbed once, not even by the food selling lady since it appeared 'nobody would want to stay in the last wagon of the train!', he saw the first human being. At least, he thought it was a human being. A clearly two to three meters tall man with a long bear and a burly stomach that seemed the young son of Santa Claus, if only he had every hair white instead of the dark brown color. He was wearing a long trench coat and...an umbrella was right at his side: a bright pink umbrella, to be more precise.

"Magic." He muttered surprised under his breath, as he heard the sort of giant roar.

"Firs'-years! Firs'-years over here! Yer better be quick!" The next moment, he was in a group together with other students, all of his age. The only thing he had was his wand that stood carefully in his robe's pocket, and he instinctively held it with his right hand, hoping everything would go fine. To say he was feeling nervous was an understatement.

Other students, older ones probably, headed towards strange carriages been carried away by strange sick looking horses with...leathery wings? The 'strange' part was probably something he had to work with: it wasn't strange...it was 'magical'.

So at the present, he had seen magical teleportation of a train, a giant man with a pink umbrella, and strange looking horses. What next?

"Now ye all better pay attention!" The man grumbled as he began to move towards a set of...boats? Did the man really expect them to row their way towards the...his eyes finally left the ground and the giant man, and concentrated a bit upwards, revealing to him a strangely wonderful sight: a magnificent castle perched atop a cliff

that faced the lake, with banners flying in the night sky as the stars shone brightly. He didn't even feel the chill of September any longer: the view took his breath away and even his cold.

"Groups of four in the boats! No pushin', no shovin', if one of ya falls than for the love of me beasties don't move! The giant squid's there to help ya get across!"

Oh...the giant squid.

Why did the words 'Kraken' suddenly join with 'A thousands leagues below the sea' and merge with 'Cthulhu' and something far worst?

Magic. He had to remember the word magic.

He didn't hurry to a boat, but just sort of followed the naturally formed line of students, all heading towards the boats. He ended up sitting next to a slightly round faced kid with...a toad in his lap, an Indian girl, and a bushy haired girl too. Well...at least he could row together with the other kid, who had a toad in his lap.

He had a toad in his lap.

Magic. Harry had to remember the words 'magic' and 'magical'.

"Where are the oars?" He muttered to himself, looking around and only finding a strange pole that seemed long enough to push the boat out of the docks.

"Now listen up all of ye!" The voice of the giant bellowed before any of the boat's occupants could reply. "Me name's Hagrid and I'm the gatekeeper of Hogwarts! Now if you'd all grab the pole and push the boat, Squid's going to take care of ye all!"

Then, using his pink umbrella and opening it, the man appeared like a mixture of that old painting concerning the crossing of the Delaware by Washington, and some sort of strange Mary Poppins: holding the umbrella in front of him, it was like an invisible wind had risen from behind him and only him, and had started to carry his boat onwards.

"Well...that was characteristic." He muttered before grabbing the pole, helped by the other kid who had barely gotten over the shock of the scene.

As the boat sailed towards the castle, the bushy haired girl commented.

"The castle of Hogwarts has numerous charms and spells on it that makes it difficult to access: there are a lot of areas warded against intruders, and unless the wizard or the witch passes through the initiation ritual it is risky for them to take another route than this. In History of Magic, it is said that Hogwarts is by itself sustained, built and kept repaired by magic itself."

"Interesting." The Indian girl replied, but the tone that she had used in answering hadn't actually been that of an interesting person.

It was then that Harry found himself torn between doing the right thing and doing the worrisome thing. He could ignore it all, since after all it wasn't likely he'd ever even speak to the girl again, but what if instead they ended up in the same 'house' and they ended up doing the same lessons? Better to have at least someone to talk to and smartness is never something to frown upon...unless you're an idiot.

"How does that work?" He asked, curious since there actually wasn't much else to do on the boat, since it propelled itself...thanks to the giant squid.

"Well..." The girl hesitated, before finally caving in and replying. "In Defense against the dark arts it's said that Wards can 'key' in individuals depending on the will of the caster. So it was decided, as History of Magic writes about, that the headmaster once a year on the first of September allows entry and keys in to the wards the students who come by boat through the black lake...the giant squid is there to defend against 'dark wizards' who might try to infiltrate the school in that way...it's said that the squid is actually a magical creature that can discern good of hearts from evil of hearts and..."

"Fascinating." The Indian raven haired girl interrupted once more. "You'll be in Ravenclaw, I suppose."

"I don't know..." The girl mumbled back, "I mean: what if they sort us in a wrong way?"

"I'll be in Gryffindor." The round faced kid with the toad muttered, "My Gran said that if I end up anywhere else I'll be disowned."

"Why?" Harry asked, "Aren't those...just houses?"

"Gran said that it's like being in a family, but if you're in Hufflepuff you'll practically be nothing important, in Slytherin you'll become a dark wizard and in Ravenclaw I just don't have the smarts to make it so...it's Gryffindor."

"If you say so..." Harry replied diplomatically, "I think I'll end up in Ravenclaw...I've been on the books for a bit now, and I'm actually curious about this all magic thing."

"You're a muggleborn?" The bushy haired girl queried, "I'm one too! I'm Hermione by the way, Hermione Granger and did you read all books till the end? I absolutely adored the one on Transfiguration, because it kind of goes..." and then the girl spoke.

He halfway understood the words 'mass' and 'principle of conservation', but that was all.

If this was the level of brains required in Ravenclaw...then maybe he'd end up in Hufflepuff and be done with it.

The boats docked just in time for Hermione, the now positively giddier girl, to take breath and finally grant Harry's ears a moment of silence. It wasn't that he had never met someone else with a motor mouth, but at least they had had the decency to warn him in advance.

Meaning he had actually not cared and gone over to someone else...but right about now, he was in the middle of nowhere with no-one he knew and someone he still had to find.

"I'm...I'm Harry Dursley." At that Hermione actually bit her lip in frustration and a hint of probable embarrassment, which was quite actually the minimum considering she hadn't even waited for him to tell her his own name before starting her ranting.

"Well, I'm Neville, Longbottom...and this is Trevor...wait a moment, Trevor!?" The boy looked around, his toad seemingly forgotten on the boat that was now currently heading back towards the land...alone.

"Trevor!" At the exclamation, the toad made a strong croak, before jumping in the water and starting to swim back towards the docks of the castle, where the other first students were amassing.

The Indian girl instead headed off towards someone who strongly resembled her, probably a sister and considering the first year a twin, without even giving off her name.

"I have to ask...is it normal?" Harry whispered to Hermione's side, "I mean...Krakens, squids, pink umbrellas..."

"Well..." the girl hesitated, "I don't know."

"Good...I'm not alone in this madness then."

A light sigh escaped his lips, as he and the girl waited for Neville to catch his 'toad', before getting in line together with the rest of the first years.

The murmurs, of course, began the second they were made to wait on a staircase near a wide wooden door, where a severe looking woman with a pointy black hat and a green robe was looking sternly at them with the sour look typical of disappointed grannies.

Needless to say, Harry had half a suspicion somebody had been doing something wrong.

"Please wait for a moment Hagrid: Peeves set off some dung bombs for the new arrivals." The witch spoke, just as a...a ghost began to fly above their heads, apparently escaping a group of other ghosts.

"You won't catch me! Hahaha!"

"Peeves! Come back here!" A ghost with his head 'nearly' cut yelled at the other one, before passing through another wall.

"Ghosts exist." Harry whispered, nervously gulping down his saliva that had stuck in his throat...did the boogeyman exist too? And what

about the grim reaper? And Demons? Devils? The supernatural? Vampires, werewolves, heck fairies and dragons?

"Magic." He murmured to himself, "Culture shock never felt so hard."

"I know..." Hermione muttered, before finally regaining her bearings too. Well, at least more than 'scary' the ghosts appeared 'unique'.

A few minutes later, and the group reached the entry of a giant hall, where tables had been placed and candles flew in the air shining in the room and making the much needed night. The ceiling resembled the sky's stars, even down to the part of the...twinkles?

Magic. He had to remember this was all about magic.

At the center of the hall stood a hat on a chair, and then, as if it was the most normal thing of the day, the hat began to talk.

It began to sing, and finally the names began to be called: the sorting hat would sort people in their houses.

Of course.

How genius of them to avoid asking any questions and leaving a...a hat to make them in place of the staff.

He had to remember...magic.

Magic, one day or another, was not going to cut it as an explanation, but as his name was called, he stepped forward silently and pulled the thing on his head.

Well...I don't have lice!

You're...talking in my head?

Yes I am, and I don't have lice!

So...who washes you?

No-one! I've got magic to protect me...anyway, ignoring your baseless accusation that...yes, they are baseless! Use 'Magic' as an answer alright!?

Magic.

You silver-tongued you...should put you in Slytherin, but you're not made for that are you? No...You've got a good mix in here...Not a difficult choice but...

But what?

Well, let's say you have to save a friend by coming out with a secret that could potentially kill you in the process, what do you do?

How much of a friend are we talking about?

Yeah, thought so.

Hey, thought so what!?

Would you kill your parents for power?

What the hell of a question is that!?

No you wouldn't! Good enough for me. Very well...welcome to...

"Ravenclaw!" And with the yell of the hat, a table with people garbed in blue and bronze began to clap hard at their new addition.

Removing the hat and moving to the nearest free seat, he received the ritual congratulations of order...and the fact that, apparently, his clothes and ties changed color on their own based on the allegiance to which house.

He sighed...

Magic.

Author's notes

This Harry will have a bit of a wit, but not much...and his catchphrase throughout the year will probably end up being 'Magic...why am I still bothered about it?'

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 5

"Granger, Hermione." The stern voice of the woman that they had met on the stairs spoke next, and in the following moments the hat was dropped upon the head of the bushy haired girl.

"Gryffindor!" The Hat yelled a few seconds later, sending the golden and red table to cheer for the girl. Harry, on the other hand, was puzzled: the girl was smarter than him. Why did she end up in Gryffindor? It didn't make much sense, unless the girl had some sort of bravery he didn't know of. More names came and went, until finally after one of the Indian twins took a seat to the Ravenclaw table, it was the time of someone else he knew.

"Potter, Lillian!" Finally. Finally the name of his cousin: he'd get a good eye at who the girl was and maybe meet with her later on. Had he been more careful of his surroundings, he'd have noticed the complete silence that had encompassed the entirety of the hall.

The girl that came to sit on the chair had shoulder length red hair, with hazel eyes. She was wearing the normal Hogwarts attire and appeared to have fair skin...at least if the skin is white one should call it 'fair' right? Harry didn't as much as budge as the hat mused over for a couple of seconds, far more time that he had taken in deciding between Gryffindor and Ravenclaw for Hermione.

"Gryffindor!" The hat exclaimed. And after that, the Gryffindor table erupted into cheers and whistling.

"A pity...the girl who lived ended up in Gryffindor." A boy to his left commented.

"What did you expect? I was told both of her parents were in Gryffindor, and her father's the DADA instructor."

"For the defeater of You-Know-Who it's the obvious house."

Harry frowned slightly, before deciding that his interest did not actually partake of asking why people were using things like 'Girl Who lived' or 'You Know Who'.

He was already imagining a joke to use. 'You know who?' 'Yes, the doctor'.

Harry smiled to himself, patting mentally the back of his head for the nice crack joke that would never see the light of the day, considering he wouldn't be probably talking to anyone at the table.

The rest of the names came by, with Longbottom ending up in Hufflepuff, much to the boy's shock. Mentally jolting that information away, Harry's eyes settled on the widest table, the one with the professors. A strange looking man with a white beard that appeared a mixture between Merlin and Gandalf stood up. Whispers of 'Dumbledore' and 'His usual charade' echoed through the table, but as the words he pronounced were utter and complete nonsense...Harry blinked.

The next instant, food was everywhere on the table.

"I thought he'd say 'Snappersquack'." A voice muttered from the head of the table, belonging to a red haired boy with an embroiled P on the chest of his clothing. His green eyes settled around the table, before coughing lightly.

"Well, can't always win with probabilities and statistics...anyway, to the first years! I'm your Prefect, taking the place of Robert Hilliard, together with the lady at the other side of this table...which is quite far, Miss Penelope Clearwater, we're in charge of you lot. Our head of the house is Professor Filius Flitwick, who teaches charms...and is the amiable fellow sitting right next to professor McGonagall, if any of you has a problem with that, tell me and I'll be double sure to Incendio your hair before the end of the day." The fact that the boy was positively smiling as he said that made all the first years around Harry shiver.

"Joking! I will however remove points for blatant idiocy." The boy added with narrowed eyes. "If you can logically prove something, then no matter the peer pressure, nothing will happen. If you can only work on hearsay...I will have your heads waxed and used as skiing implements."

There were more nervous chuckles running around the table at that, and Harry gulped. How could the boy change from narrow eyes of doom to bright caring smile in a second?

"Anyway! Our ghost is the lovely Grey Lady," a light giggle came from atop the house table, where a clearly female ghost was hovering with a hand in front of her mouth.

"You charmer you!"

"And before I forget myself! My name is none of your business, but you can call me Basileus. Everyone calls me that...and now, after having bored you to tears: please do begin eating."

It was with cautiousness that Harry grabbed some food of strange looking texture and type and began eating it. Once he had heard that insects tasted like chicken, so probably all type of unknown beasts tasted like that? This did seem like chicken though. A really strange five legged chicken nevertheless.

"I'm muggleborn...so no, I don't know what that is." A male voice spoke to his side, earning a reply from yet another Ravenclaw.

"Don't worry: the majority of Ravenclaw is either half-blood or muggleborn. It has to do with wits you see: a lot of pureblood fools don't care about making new discoveries, they just bother with traditions, practices...and so they never join the house of the smarts."

Which led once more to Harry querying in his mind just why did Hermione of all people, end in Gryffindor.

"Something bothering you?" A blond haired boy asked at his left, being a first year too.

"Ehm...No, nothing." Harry replied meekly.

"Well, I'm Anthony, Anthony Goldstein." The boy brought his right hand forward, and Harry queasily accepted it. "You shy?"

"Well..." He murmured back, only for another voice to butt in.

"Don't be! We're all nerds probably in here...no need to be shy alongside your peers." A boy with dark hair and brown eyes replied, "Oh, I'm Michael by the way. Any of you tried to cross reference the charms and defense against the dark arts book yet? I found out that 'Incendio' is in both..."

"Diffindo too: you can cut a tree or cut a person in half." One more voice spoke, belonging to a boy on the other side of the table. "I'm Terry...sorry to interrupt but..."

"Not a problem! Us first years should stick together right?" Michael replied with a light grin, "And study groups come easier around."

It was then that Harry began to think, just as those three boys kept on chatting happily about cross referencing and spells...that maybe he was the one who had ended up in the wrong house.

"So then..." It was then that Anthony realized he hadn't heard the name of the boy next to him, and indeed Harry found himself slightly flustered.

"Harry. I'm Harry."

"Well, what had you curious about? We're in Ravenclaw: curiosity has to be sated!"

"Can I start assigning points right now?" Basileus suddenly exclaimed with a light grin, having probably heard that exclamation.

Nobody pretty much replied to him, albeit the smug grins circling around the table were a good indication that indeed, he had been heard.

"It's just that...well, I was speaking on the boat with the girl, Hermione: she seemed so smart and all...and yet she ended up in Gryffindor." There was a thoughtful look on Anthony's face, before a reply came from Basileus.

"Oh, that's normal." Harry's head turned to look at the boy, waiting for him to explain probably. "You see, Ravenclaw is for wits and smarts, but it doesn't mean 'intelligence', it just means thinking that knowledge is far more helpful than bravery, cunningness or loyalty...things like that. Basically: you'd do small hours to learn something? Yes, then it's Ravenclaw. You'd ask questions to things you want to learn about? Yes, then you're Ravenclaw. You ask repeatedly questions on how things work around? Then it's Ravenclaw. Muggleborns and half-blood are naturally Ravenclaws because depending on how they grew up, for them all of this," at

that the teen gestured at the hall, "Is new, exciting and filled with questions. The hat catches on to the curiosity, and if nothing else gets your fancies, then off you trot to Ravenclaw."

"Well but...the girl was a muggleborn too." Harry found himself replying.

"Then she was just naturally braver than curious." Basileus shrugged back. "Or maybe she asked the hat. You see: the Hat sorts you alright, but when in doubt, the opinion is asked to the one beneath. Judging by your lost looks I suppose you have more than a dozen of questions about now, right?"

It was a sheepish Harry who nodded slowly.

"Well then, you see? Ravenclaw. Learning is power, knowledge is power, asking questions is a road to power. Pardon the momentarily digression into Slytherin-talk, but the gist of it is that as long as you question, then you learn, and as long as you learn, then you're Ravenclaw."

"Good of you to be inspiring the new generations, Mr. Sfor, but please keep the dialogue for a lunch, not for a dinner." The professor Flitwick, their head of the house, hobbled right next to where the prefect was. Now that he was standing, Harry could clearly see just what height the man reached: barely to the table actually.

"Professor, you know that when I start ranting..."

"I know: anyway do please come over to my office after dinner to get the schedules for the first years. Miss Clearwater will take care of guiding the students to their dormitories." Then, turning to the first years with a Cheshire cat grin, the 'dwarf' commented happily, "We'll see each other in charms on Tuesday by the way." And with that, the professor wobbled away.

Finally, as the dinner began to come to an end, the headmaster, Dumbledore, addressed the crowd one last time.

"I must remind all students that Mr. Filch has a list of banned items in his office that students can peruse. It is also to be noted that curfew is in effect after eight o'clock, and that students found out of

their common rooms will be punished with points removal and detention. The third floor corridor on the right side of the school is off-limits to everyone, and...I suppose that is all. Prefects, guide your housemates to their respective common rooms." With a quick smile, the Headmaster stood up and left, soon followed by the rest of the professors.

Harry's eyes drifted for a moment on the raven haired man that he had known as 'Severus', moving out from the teacher's desk. Why did he have half a thought he was forgetting something?

"Come along now." Basileus remarked, standing up as the food on the table disappeared with a small 'pop', "Off you go."

And Harry did just that, following the other students who in turn followed the female prefect alongside the castle's rooms that held moving armors.

"Magic."

Through painted hallways that actually appeared pretty much real.

"Magic."

Circling staircases that spun around repeatedly.

"Magic."

With the portraits actually looking at them with curiosity and small smiles.

"Magic."

Finally, dreading having to spend the night sleeping outside in a corridor, the group of Ravenclaws reached a specific door that appeared to have a bronze eagle as a knocker. The fact that the knocker actually spoke meant little to nothing of course.

...Magic.

"For some I go fast, for others I'm slow.

To most people, I'm an obsession.

Relying on me is a well-practiced lesson.

What am I?"

The knocker, of course, had to speak a riddle.

"Time." The female prefect spoke clearly, as the knocker actually knocked against the door, having it open without a sound. "The riddle will change every month, so you'd better keep your wits with you and learn...or if you can't, wait until someone comes by to help you."

With that said, Harry knew he was screwed twice again: his help in solving riddles was abysmal, to say the least.

Maybe the library, if the school had one, had some sort of giant encyclopedia on riddles he could take out and use? As they entered the common room, he looked surprised at the amount of books hanging around.

Truly they weren't kidding when they said things about Ravenclaw being for the smart: books piled up in mountains and among shelves and desks appeared to be outright flapping around at their entrance.

With ease, the disorder turned to order as the leather bound books found their way upon the shelves by themselves, while the female prefect merely coughed a moment, before pointing to two set of stairs within the room.

"Now, we of Ravenclaw have a few rules: no noise in the common room after six in the afternoon and no noise in the rooms at all. Do not take notes on the common room's books and don't take any of them out to read: they are yours to peruse within the common room however." After a few moments, the portrait swung open once more, and Basileus entered with a stack of papers.

"First years! Grab your papers and have fun, for tomorrow you start with Potions and end with defense against the dark arts...hope you studied your potion books, because Snape is a veritable ass."

"Basileus!" A portrait exclaimed.

"What? It's true!" Basileus muttered back, handing the paper's off. "Anyway: do not, and I repeat for your own good, do not try and antagonize him. Do not try and answer all questions he asks you and try, please try to keep calling him 'professor'...He'll favor the Slytherin, as always. Now instead, for defense against the dark arts..."

"Basileus, the kids are dropping." Penelope pointed out, only for the boy to shrug.

"Kids: want to know how to survive tomorrow or you lot prefers to go blind?"

"We'd like to know," was the general murmur in the common room, followed by more murmurs on this 'Snape' and potions.

"Well then, defense against the dark arts is taught by Professor Potter," Harry repressed a gurgled breath, "yes, he's the father of the girl who lived, and yes, he favors Gryffindor like there was no tomorrow and hates Slytherin like no tomorrow...which is actually the opposite for Snape. Don't try and play goody two shoes with both of them...keep to the back and keep quiet."

"Fascinating...you want to make the kids scared on their first night, Basil?"

The red haired teen scoffed, before waving at Penelope and heading off to the male side of the dormitory.

"You will see: thanks to my marvelous suggestions, they will not incur in the wrath of any of the professors."

Penelope rolled her eyes, before more gently turning to speak to the remaining children.

"Now then...don't take everything Basil says to heart," she began slowly, "He's a bit of a paranoid-pessimistic-rambling fool, but he means well. At least...I hope he does, because you never know." She murmured while winking. "Now however...off to bed you lot! Don't want to be late for tomorrow's lesson would you? The rooms have your name tags out by the door: no risk getting lost! Males go up on the left while females go on the right...and if any of you bloody tries to make a prank, I swear I will set the furniture on you."

And with that final threatening notice, the entire first years student corps moved out to their rooms.

It was going to be an interesting first year...of that he was sure.

Still, Potter?

If he had a professor Potter at lesson, then wouldn't that mean it was his father who had...a brother? Now that he thought about that, he hadn't much watched the professors at the table had he? He had been too nervous to spare glances elsewhere, and as a result...

Was it a male or a female Potter?

If it was a female, then his previous theory on the 'single mother' with child was verified.

If it was a male however, could it be the old film-theory of the 'crude-man' bitter with the world for the death of his wife that needed to keep his wits for his only daughter?

Or maybe they simply hadn't cared to adopt him, but it didn't matter much at this point: sure, he had other family, but it was just kind of like with Aunt Marge. He knew she existed, but Vernon didn't like his sister...and the dogs.

So it could be like that, could it?

At the very least his roommates did not prove to be difficult to get along with: they were fast asleep just like him.

Author's notes

At first I didn't know there was a Prefect in Ravenclaw except for Clearwater, (It turns out there was one, who is briefly mentioned in here and on Pottermore) since I had already taken plans for the name and all, I went with Basileus Sfor. (Because, as always, I stick to the few 'OC' I ever create to keep them as much as normal as possible) PS: you probably won't be seeing him ever again. No, really. At least for a long, long while. His duty was just to hand over the schedules and some explanations. Nothing more.

That said, correct me if I'm wrong, but all classes are divided by year, but they all have lessons together right? (I looked at the HP wiki, and for 'Charms' I clearly saw all four colors of the houses in the picture there, meaning they're all doing the classes together) (Which kind of makes sense if their only teachers are the few they have for that number of students)

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Conundrum 6

Potions came after breakfast. It was one of those thing called 'the passing of time', meaning that time can only flow forward, unless some sort of 'magic' interrupts its normal flow...which by now Harry had no doubt could pretty much happen. In truth, if teleportation was available, if transfiguration could do what the book stated and so on, then what was the problem with changing time?

Well, there were those sort-of problems coming from the past-self doing something idiotic or not being able to change things because 'fate' had its ways with you, but it wasn't that the real reason he was meddling with time.

It was his self-berating attitude of having risked being late, when he finally managed to enter the classroom and take the last free seat in the last row at the far end, right next to a never known before Hufflepuff who appeared as devoid of particular signs as he could go.

He did so just in time, because the next instant their professor, the man that had actually helped Harry to get his wizard stuff, entered the classroom from a side door. The stern look was intimidating, as were the first few choice words.

He actually had to question what dunderheads meant. He had never heard about dunderheads. Stupid, idiotic, imbeciles...but dunderheads? Really? Who'd use such a word after all?

"Mr. Weasley," the voice sounded just like when the man had brought Harry to Diagon Alley, if not actually far more filled with loath, "Where is a Bezoar found?"

Harry knew the answer to that one: it was the stomach of a goat.

"I...I don't know sir."

The voice belonged to a boy with bright red hair, who apparently was sitting at the same cauldron of his cousin.

"Miss Potter, what is the difference between Wolf's bane and Monkshood?"

This time, it was the girl who stood silent, embarrassed probably from all peers eyes on her as she had no idea on the answer to give.

It was then that a hand raised itself in the crowd. Hermione's right hand had been lifted, probably because the girl wanted to answer the question. Bravely foolish then, Harry thought. It was clear now what the difference was between a Ravenclaw and a Gryffindor: the girl was positively bubbly, like she hadn't even realized that the professor was a veritable fearsome creature that would probably snap someone in half with a mere snort.

The other Ravenclaw kept quiet, standing in the back lines without as much as muttering a single breath. Many were probably thinking, just like him, how useful the suggestion of Basileus had been to keep quiet, keep the head low, and stay in the back.

Although he kind of didn't remember if he had actually been told to stay in the back, or if his brain had merely suggested it too...by having him come in late.

Now that was just ludicrous: his brain couldn't suggest him to come in later just so he could get the last seat in the corner, could he?

"I don't know sir." The reply came after a minute had already stretched by, and finally Severus' voice turned around the room.

"Mr. Dursley?" At the polite inquiry of his name, Harry blinked, before standing up with a gut twisting feeling within him that he was just about to get the mother of all difficult questions.

"Yes professor?"

"What potion comes to your mind that requires wormwood essence, Valerian and Asphodel?"

"I don't know professor." He replied quickly, "It's in the sixteenth chapter...I reached till the ninth." He cursed his quick mouth a second later. Why did he have to try and justify it?

"You know the chapter it is in but not the name, Mr. Dursley? Pray tell how that works."

"Skimmed the pages professor...I remember the picture of wormwood on chapter sixteen for..." His mind recalled the picture of

the wormwood plant, just next to... "Was it the draught of living dead perhaps?"

"Correct Mr. Dursley." Severus mused, "Want to answer the previous questions?"

"The Bezoar's in the stomach of goats professor...kind of stuck in my head since I read about it: I mean, it's not like they process lambs with lumps of rock stuck in their bellies do they? And...Wolf's bane is known as Aconite, right? Just like Monkshood is too so...they're the same plant?"

"Fifteen points to Ravenclaw." The raven haired man replied slowly, before raising an eyebrow in Harry's direction. "Five more points for taking notes...just like the rest of you should be doing right now."

Harry's perplexed expression lasted only for a second. His eyes lowering themselves to his right hand, he realized that he was indeed taking notes...well, more than notes he was scribbling to ease his stress, but being that far away from the professor, it was entirely possible his scribbles of small stars and twirls had been misinterpreted as taking notes.

He quickly drew a line and began taking notes about...well, what he had told.

It felt strange, his ears were probably flushing from the stress and half of his notes ended up blotched in ink as the professor began to explain about a boil-curing potion. The only thing he was glad of was that the guy he had ended up being paired with wrote big enough for him to copy the relevant notes without actually having to ask for them.

Just what had taken him to answer!? He should have kept his mouth shut. He had to remain on the average side of the place. He had to keep himself average, like everyone else.

It was then, that in a small part of his brain a single question rose.

Why?

Why did he have to be average? Why couldn't he try and be good at something?

He had to. It was needed.

Needed for what?

Survival.

Wait, how did that make any sense? Why did he have to keep himself average and...unnoticed? It kind of was strange, especially...no. It was no use dillydallying about this or that: he'd go with the flow, as always. Better to be a sheep among the herd and hide within it, then try and stick your head out for the wolf to take.

The lesson passed without any other accidents, and just as he was about to leave, the voice of the professor cut in quickly.

"Mr. Dursley, stay for a moment." He shivered in fright, silently. No professor had ever asked him to stay after class ever. Truly, no professor had ever taken an interest in him. This was wrong and going against all eleven years of life in him.

Mildly put, he didn't know how to react to this.

He felt cold and numb, waiting for a reply from his professor that moved towards a nearby closet. The wooden panels opened with a small creaking noise, as the last students dwindled out of the classroom in their hurry to leave behind the 'awful' professor.

"This is yours." The man's lips were pursed in a slight frown as he handed over to the boy what appeared to be a potion's book.

An advanced, highly scribbled on the cover, book that apparently had seen better days. The cover was grey, and the title recited 'Advanced Potion Making'. Within it, the words 'This book is the propriety of the Half-Blood Prince' had been scribbled on the upper corner, as Harry could see having on habit opened the first page.

"Professor?"

"It is a Newt Textbook and as such I do not expect you will need it until the end of the sixth year. In any event, it belonged to your mother, and she would have wanted you to have it...I'm giving it to you now because I need the cabinet's space." The man replied

snappishly, "If you have nothing better to do than gallivanting in front of me, Mr. Dursley, please take your leave." The order came coldly, and still numb for the strange, and completely unexpected...gift? Harry was out of there in a flash.

Pushing the book in his bag, he shook his head as he made a small dash to reach the end line of the first years heading towards lunch.

Just what the hell did the potion professor mean, by the book being of his mother? The Half-Blood prince seemed a pretty male name, rather than female. Why would anyone call himself 'Prince' instead of 'Princess', if said anyone was a girl?

Still, maybe the used book was just that: used. Maybe his mother had used it once, and had been the last to use it before their death. Now that he thought about it, he kind of understood why people fawned over the 'Girl-Who-Lived': she had avenged all the dead wizards because of 'You-Know-Who' while giving peace to the grieving families.

He understood it now, but still it felt strange to sit among the Ravenclaws, who were looking at him like he had grown a second head.

"What?" He muttered, earning himself a grin from Anthony who deemed it worthy to reply.

"Well...you just managed to do the impossible, Mr. Dursley." The boy spoke quietly.

"You realize," this time it was the Prefect, the bloody Prefect Clearwater who spoke, "That never, ever, did Severus Snape ever assign points that weren't to Slytherin?"

"Eh?"

"He doesn't know!" Another Ravenclaw along the table exclaimed, earning more murmurs.

"Severus Snape has always removed points from houses. And the few assigned...well...thirty points? In one go? There's something amiss here." Penelope spoke again, "Did you know him beforehand?"

Harry blinked for a moment, trying to recall...before shaking his head.

"No...he and my father hate each other though...and I don't know why, but are you sure? I mean..."

"Yes. It's unprecedented: you know, if Snape stops favoring Slytherin this year...then maybe we could even win the cup?" The question made far more Ravenclaws turn their eyes at him. He gulped down nervously, already imagining himself being brought up as a 'savior' and then thrown to the wolves as he failed.

"Well..." Harry tried a nervous chuckle, "Could we please speak of something else? Please?"

"Oh well, there's Quidditch..." and as the discussion digressed elsewhere, Harry raised a puzzled eyebrow: had they really changed argument that easily? They had made it seem such a big deal, of winning the house cup. Yet now the table had all returned to talking about that sport with brooms...and Beaters? What was it, a vicious variation of tag and polo?

After lunch, Harry found himself, once more, late. It could have had to do with a portrait stopping him to ask some questions about the chances of Ravenclaw winning the cup for once, but then again he had answered he just hoped he'd survive the following lessons, earning a bright smile from the apparently old gentleman in the portrait.

Once more, he ended up in the far behind corner of the room, and once more he found himself sitting next to a non-descriptive Hufflepuff...no, this one wasn't non-descriptive.

"Neville?" Harry asked, looking at the boy who suddenly turned around to get a good gaze at the other eleven years old kid.

"Harry? Oh! Didn't see you for a moment. Busy looking for Trevor in my backpack and kind of worried for him so..." The boy was flustered, so flustered that Harry couldn't help but grin a little.

"Are you sure that's a toad and not some sort of Lupin the Third?" Neville's face frowned for a moment, before said toad found its way on top of the boy's hair.

"Trevor! There you are." The boy sighed in relief, grabbing the toad from his hair before asking. "What's a Lupin the Third?"

"It's the name of a really famous thief...you've never watched a cartoon of it?" Harry asked curiously. Maybe Neville didn't have cable television, or satellite one, but still it was a pretty known name for a cartoon.

"Cartoon?"

"You don't know what a Cartoon is? It's a set of moving pictures...displayed on a television."

"Oh! Photos. Strange way to call it." No, Harry decided he would not keep on the argument. If Neville thought that photos and television were the same thing...then again, the portrait moved, didn't they? And if the portrait moved...

Then the photos moved too.

So they had never needed to develop 'Cartoons' in order to watch things, which meant that they didn't need television to look at films, because a photo could do it pretty much in the same way.

In the end, as the professor entered the classroom, a pair of glasses on his face and a rowdy red hair to differentiate him, he let all subjects drop in wait for the first lesson to begin.

"Well, my name is..." *ribbit* Trevor's croaking sound came right in Harry's left ear, making him wince. How the hell had the toad manage to reach his shoulder without him noticing.

"Trevor!" Neville hissed in a low murmur, "I'm sorry." The Hufflepuff hurriedly added before taking the frog once more and settling her in his bag.

"Potter. But you can call me Mr. Prongs." At that, there was a loud huff coming from the first rows, as the man kept on talking, "Anyway, I take it you all came from Mr. Sniv...Snape's first lesson, right? I

should actually give you the hours off, since surviving that obnoxious...I mean, that serious professor is a bit of a hard job...but we have much to learn! First of all, take your wands out."

Harry obeyed, trying to look at the professor's wand movement...if only he could see beyond two relatively tall Slytherin who apparently stood seated in front of them.

His wand felt cool, even cold in his hand. The polished black surface of the wood barely reflected the light in the classroom, and as his fingers numbly began to trace the lines on the wooden surface, he made a light sigh he didn't think he had been holding.

"Now, defense against the dark arts means not 'learning how to curse the living hell out of people because we think they're ugly'," the sentence was delivered all in one bout, completely and utterly sarcastic as it went by, "It means 'learning how to put up a good defense', or, as I prefer to say it: push enemies the hell away from you." With that, Harry heard the professor yell a word 'Flipendo', before hearing a loud booming noise coming from the front.

"As you may have seen." Harry of course hadn't. "The Flipendo spell merely generates an orange light as it strikes the target and...pushes it back."

In front of their desks, a small ball suddenly appeared, floating but tied by a small rope to the wooden surface by a materialized hook of metal.

"Now, all of you open the book at page seventeen, look at the wand movement, and try and imitate it in regard to the balloon floating in front of you." The professor spoke once more. "Remember to not pronounce the spell: if you do so correctly, a flicker of orange light should appear at the tip of your wand. If it does, touch the balloon and, if the balloon moves, then congratulations, you can now try and pronounce the spell...possibly one at the time, in front of me, and not against one another."

Of course page seventeen bore a strange set of scribbles that represented the wand movements.

And of course...

After two hours, Harry Dursley had not managed to do the damn spell, and neither had Neville. It just seemed to be bloody useless, no matter how many times he tried to do it.

It just...didn't want to work.

"I did it!" A voice rang just as the second hour ticked by, and the female voice did indeed belong to one Hermione Granger.

"Well done Miss Granger! Thirty points to Gryffindor!" Thirty points? For doing a bloody wand movement? He had to answer three different questions and he had gotten twenty-five points!

Why was he being jealous anyway? No, more than jealous he was frustrated. He hadn't even managed to see the professor do the wand movements once! And a book is only as good as it is written, right?

"Well, practice hard and we'll see each other next time! Off you go!" And off, indeed, he went. He stormed out as fast as he could, like a man on a mission of some sorts, not even stopping to answer the questions coming from the students.

"You think he's going smug on professor Snape for having given off more points than him?" Neville asked, worriedly.

"I don't care." Harry muttered, "Did you manage to see what hand movements the man did? I barely could see anything."

"No, I didn't." Neville's reply was pretty much all that Harry had expected the boy to say. With a loud sigh, he turned to look at the other students dwindling by. Of course the Girl-who-lived was basically surrounded by yet more people asking questions, but Hermione appeared to be heading out alone.

Good enough for him...and probably Neville if he followed.

"Hermione!" Harry exclaimed, waving towards the bushy haired girl who stopped at being called, turning around with a sort of pained expression, albeit it lasted less than a second.

"Yes...Harry?" For once, he decided to ignore the feeling of hurt he felt for being '...Harry'. They had met on the boat and he hadn't even made an impression on her? Now that hurt.

"I wanted to know if, well, you had time to show me the wand movements the professor did...I was in the back and couldn't see and..."

"The library in half an hour?" The girl queried back with a half-hesitating tone. Harry nodded: he didn't have anything else to do now, did he?

Of course, when he finally did get into the library, precisely half an hour later...he found out that no, Hermione Granger wasn't there, nor would she arrive in the following hours.

"If she didn't have the time...she could have just bloody said so." Harry murmured to himself, putting his stuff back into his bag and heading to drop it off at the Ravenclaw's tower. He had even decided to wait for the girl near the entrance and he knew, he damn well knew, the girl hadn't entered the library.

The knocker's riddle was of course the same as the night before, and as he entered the common room he was greeted...by the portrait hanging atop the fire pit.

"Hello young crow! How was your first day at Hogwarts? You should hurry up, lest you be late for dinner." The voice was kind and maternal, and probably the question was rehearsed for every first year around.

"It's fine." He replied meekly, before heading upstairs to drop his stuff, and then coming back down.

"Now there, young man." The portrait began again, "What's there to be earned by lying to me? You look like someone played you a nasty trick...was it the Weasley brothers? I told those gits to stay out of the feathers of my younglings!"

"Huh? No! Really...it's nothing: she probably forgot." Harry replied quietly, "And it's just the first day, so she's probably got to get the hang of the place too." Maybe Hermione didn't even know where the library was... No, wait a moment: the girl had been the one to tell

him to meet there, and he had even gathered the courage to ask a portrait where it was!

"If you say so...still, what did this miss forget to do?"

"You're awfully nosy for a portrait." Harry muttered back, earning only a shrug from the antique-looking woman.

"Got nothing better to do: a lot of the students easily ignore me except for 'morning' and 'goodnight', just because I'm a portrait doesn't mean I don't feel the sting when they ignore me...you know?"

"Yeah...I'm Harry."

"Helena," the portrait replied smoothly, "Well then, what was it you needed from said miss?"

"I...I kind of wanted to learn the wand movement of the Flipendo, I was too far in the back and couldn't see them, and since she had actually managed to make it right in the last moments of the classroom..."

The portrait raised an eyebrow, before nodding slowly.

"I see...well, all I can suggest with the Flipendo is to be charmingly nice about it: it is a spell made to politely knock people backwards...not like the Reducto meant to smash you to smithereens. Your movements need to be slow and gracious, not fast and to the point."

"Thanks?"

"Oh now, no need! Thank me when you'll really mean it: once you learn the spell." And with that, Harry still didn't know, but he had made yet another friend.

If one counts the fact that the portrait turned far more 'boring' the moment Harry left the room, the Grey lady floating down through the walls...whistling.

Even Peeves stopped at the sight for a moment, blinking before deciding he was having hallucinations. And as a poltergeist...something was clearly not right.

Author's notes

More hints. (Two words of notes, and that's all)

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 7

Harry groaned as he took in the once more filled with people room. This was starting to become a problem: he had never been late once in his life as a student. If anything, he prided himself in having always been to class early by at least a quarter of an hour and barely arriving in the nick of time was starting to drain his nerves. The bell ringing to alert the students to wake up had apparently worked: only, it had rung fifteen minutes later than usual. Some trick from an upperclassman to avoid the rowdy dash for breakfast, probably. Which was kind of stupid, considering they usually all had breakfast at the same time and the only 'rowdy' behavior in Ravenclaw was the dash for the bathrooms.

Still, once more his breakfast had consisted of toast, nicked just in time before heading straight off towards the classroom for Charms. He mentally thanked the inventor of the talking portraits, because they were life savors and optimal navigators.

So, once again, Harry Dursley found himself in the last row of a classroom that had been apparently divided into two sides, all with three rows. Of course, he ended up in the furthest away spot, next to a Slytherin this time.

If this was the subtle way of the world to tell him that his life was going to be 'exotic' and 'variable', then he mentally hoped it would stop. He was fine with keeping things average. Why did he have to end up sitting next to someone he didn't know? Oh yes, because Neville apparently had a Hufflepuff sitting next to him. He of course had tried to wave to the toad-boy, but the Hufflepuff had been busy looking around everywhere, probably for his toad, rather than at him.

It was starting to become frustrating.

He decided he'd do his best to ignore the Slytherin, not that it matter much since the green and silver guy was doing the same. The kid had blond, nearly white hair and a sort of permanent sneer on his face...no, it couldn't be possible...yet it was.

He couldn't help it, he had to stare. Apparently 'staring' still managed to catch the attention of the 'stared at' element, because the boy did turn around with a shrewd and arrogant face and snap.

"What?"

"You...You're training your face to scowl?"

"What if I am? What's your bloody need to know you nosy squib?" The boy replied quickly, crossing his arm in front of him as he turned his best murderous glare on.

"Squib? Is that...an insult?" Kind of like using 'bloody'...he was eleven years old alright, but he knew there were the 'F-' words, not the 'B-' words, to use if one wanted to drive home a point.

"What are you, a muggle born?" The blond boy asked scathing, his very own voice bordering on the obnoxious.

"Oh hell...you're a Nazi." Harry muttered rolling his eyes, "This conversation is over." He added, turning his face to look at the wall. It was still better than engage in conversation with a probably fanatical Klu-Klu-Klux clan guy. Was it Klu-Klux anyway? Wasn't it supposed to be Ku-Ku-klux? Klux? He knew a 'klutz'...or maybe it was Ku-Klux-Klan...too many Kl and K for his mind to think of.

"Hey, I'm talking to you!" The blond haired boy hissed between his teeth, "What the hell is a Nazi?"

Harry raised an eyebrow, before muttering.

"You don't know about the second world wide war?"

The boy blinked once owlshly, before shrugging.

"It's muggle history, it's worthless for a wizard to know about."

"So you don't know what a Nazi is." Harry replied, "Meaning it's one less thing you know and one more thing I know...like saying 'Squib'. I don't know what it means: you don't know what Nazi means." Maybe if he played it on the safe side...

"Oh! So you aren't a git. Good of you to know how Slytherins work, but after all you're a Ravenclaw: should have expected you'd con me into exchanging knowledge, well..." No, wait a minute. He wasn't conning the boy, he had no idea what...

"A squib is a child born of wizard parents who has no ability to use magic or magic elements, but is considered a 'magical being' by wards and the likes...they're the dishonor of Pureblood families and are usually disowned because of it."

"Well...so I was right. You're a Nazi...Nazi is short for Nazist," Harry began explaining, "The second world wide war began because of a really bad guy called Hitler, who wanted to rule the world. He believed that his race, the Germans, were superior to every other race and thus should rule on others. Many who weren't 'Arians' like the Nazist called the 'superior' race were persecuted and then killed in gas chambers..."

"Oh, that's clearly a stupid muggle idea. It's the magic that makes one superior to another: pureblood families are stronger and are kept as such because they don't thin their blood with muggles. You-know-who," here the blond boy whispered, "was the leader of such a movement, and he would have won and helped the magical world survive, if not for the 'brat-who-lived'."

"Was he an Arab?" Harry asked curious.

"Who was?"

"Yunohu...no, wait, that's more of a Japanese name."

"Eh? You-Know-Who...He-Who-cannot-be-named."

"Ah...'You know who?' Got it." Harry replied with a quick nod. At first he had thought he had been hearing things, like maybe the name had in truth been 'Yu' instead of Yunohu, but then again this confirmed it: wizards were a bit on the strange side.

Silence stretched uncomfortably for a few seconds, before the blond boy finally managed to spit out the next words.

"So, you're a muggleborn, a half-blood or a Pureblood?"

Harry frowned for a second, before querying.

"Half-blood means?"

"One of your parents was a muggle." The other boy swiftly provided. "Sheesh, did your parents teach you anything before sending you here in Hogwarts?"

"My...real parents were both wizards, but I grew up with my mother's sister when they were killed." Harry replied quietly, "She and her husbands are both muggles, and so..."

"Tough luck having to live with muggles." The boy snorted, seemingly satisfied that he had two wizards as parents, "Well, what's your name then?"

"I'm Harry."

"Draco." The other boy replied, "So I suppose you grew up without knowing anything about the wizard world, right?" The question, apparently, seemed to hold something else within it because...he couldn't put it, but if he had to guess...this 'Draco' had some sort of...wistful look? Longing look?

"I had professor Snape explain a few things to me, when he took me to Diagon Alley to acquire my wizard stuff." Harry replied hesitantly.

"Professor Snape? He's the Slytherin head of the house..." Draco muttered, "Of course they had to send the Head of the Slytherin house to do the job...they hate our house."

Harry raised an eyebrow.

"Who does?"

"Everyone else." Draco replied, "You Know Who was from Slytherin, as well as a lot of other dark wizards in the ages. So there isn't another house who likes Slytherin, and we're basically alone with ourselves most of the time. We still managed to win the house cup though," the blond haired boy was smug right about then, "Proves they're just jealous of us."

"Might as well be that." Harry replied diplomatically, "I...I kind of go on a 'don't do to others what you don't want done to yourself' thing." He pointed out, "Don't care about...blood status? Is that it? If it's anything like the Nazi ideology, then I'm sorry to say it...but it's false."

At those words, Draco was completely out of his mind, his eyes bulging were a good of an indication as ever, and so Harry hastily added.

"Unless you can prove it, that is." He supplied, "Books, brochures, anything of the sort?"

What the hell was he, a judge at Norimberga? If the kid wanted to play the Magical Nazi, then it surely wasn't his business to interrupt him...was it? He was already speaking too much, if only he had kept quiet from the beginning but no, of course he had to stare.

"I'll look into it." With this, Draco actually displayed another smug grin...was he really serious about it then? After all, if there was one thing Harry knew...it was that he knew nothing about the Wizard world.

For all that he knew, maybe You-Know-Who...damn he had to find out how he was called, using an appellative was just plain stupidity! Well, anyway, for all that he knew, this guy might have been right to begin with: maybe you needed two magical parents to get magical children...that the case it was just like with Europe's dwindling rates of child births...soon there would be no European left! Which was stupid, because when one thought about it all that it took was just for the Stork to deliver more kids. Alright that she was lazy, but truly, it didn't take much to hire some help.

As Harry's mind was filled with a sort of squadron of the Luftwaffen, only with Storks and babies held in their beak, because his mind was seriously processing the thought of Nazi Wizards and magical babies probably...and there was also Doctor Who standing flying as the squad leader aboard his Tardis...

He shook his head, clearing his thoughts from the day-dream he had unwillingly entered, and finally realized that indeed, professor Flitwick had been talking to Lillian for a while.

"...your parents...well, enough of a chit-chat." For some reason, Lillian was looking down at her desk, where a white feather was now standing.

Just like in front of his desk and in front of the other desks too.

"Now, the incantation we will learn today is 'Wingardium Leviosa!' It is an extremely useful spell, care to tell me why?"

Hermione of course lifted her hand up, just like half of the Ravenclaws within the room.

"Miss Patil?" looking at the Ravenclaw of the two.

"It enables an object to float, professor. It helps in moving heavy weights and stuff..."

"You are correct Miss Patil, five points to Ravenclaw." Having said that, he quickly gestured with his wand against his own feather, and Harry saw it.

The good thing of the charm's class was that with only three rows per side, even in the last row he could still pretty well see the feather and the professor's movements...because he stood on a wooden stool.

"Practice to your heart's content!" Filius exclaimed, while moving to write on the chalkboard the key inflexion of the word and the wand movements.

"Wingardium Leviosa." Harry muttered, moving his wand as slowly as he could to get the movement right.

"Wingardium Leviosa." He murmured again, when the feather refused to budge. Again and again he muttered those damn two words under his breath, until his tongue was rasping against a sore throat and his wrist began to feel a bit 'clunky'.

Yet nothing happened.

The feather stayed firmly down there. It helped that a lot of other guys didn't manage the feat either...but of course...

"Wingardium Leviosa!" Hermione had barely yelled that, more than likely just 'smugly' pronounced it, and there it goes, the feather lifts itself up in the air. For a moment, I'm actually jealous. Why is it that my wand refuses to cooperate? I mean, it's just a stick isn't it?

No.

Wait a moment...if it was just a stick, then grabbing one from a, let's say, a tree branch would be the same. My wand's powerful and I know it. What else did Olivander say? That the wand chooses its wizard. Doesn't that mean that the wand actually has a conscience of sorts? And if it does have one, then it isn't just a stick. Shroud of a Dementor and Thestral hair...Harry knew what he was going to do that afternoon. He'd go to the library, look for information on those two...things, and then he'd try and get into the 'mood' to make the wand work.

Maybe he had to coo it like a puppy?

No...a 'dark' wand doesn't need to be cooed, does it?

"Excellent work Miss Granger!" How the hell does he know her name already? Patil was of his house, but also Hermione's surname? Oh right, Ravenclaw's the house of the smart: he's probably memorized our names already.

"Five points to Gryffindor." Filius adds. At the end of the lesson, a few more students manage to make it float. Harry had mentally begun to beg his wand to work, but except for nothing, well, nothing had happened. Maybe he really should have his wand checked.

'Determined' wand or not, some things just should work.

The next period was going to be History of Magic. This time however...this time he actually arrived first.

He arrived so early indeed that he took the first row. There was no way he was going to stay in the back now!

The other students crowded in...all taking the back seats.

Of course by the time the last students trickled in, he realized the first row was completely empty...save for him.

The professor was a ghost.

Of course again, the professor's voice was as boring and ghastly as the worst possible thing in the entire universe.

Of course...it was too good to be true. The lesson that passed was one of extremely excruciating pain and boredom, but he endured by taking notes...and then as he read one passage back something clicked into him.

"The goblin rebellion was squashed by the wits of the metal scaled, who sat upon the thrones of bones of his enemies..." The tone was deadly. Really, the tone was extremely boring but...but the words weren't. It was like reading a lord of the ring version, down to the very details of what color the Goblin King had his socks.

The ghost, Cuthbert Binns, kept on talking until the very end of the lesson, before sitting back down on the chair. The class scrambled away at the speed of light, all except him having something better to do than ask questions to the professor.

"Mister Dursley? Why are you still here?" The professor asked in his drawling voice. Harry bit his lower lip for a moment, before querying.

"I'm sorry professor...but I'm just curious...how did the battle end?"

"Surely you possess the book, do you not have it? I have a second hand copy that..."

"Uh...No professor! It's not that!" Harry hastily replied, "It's just that...I was reading my notes and the book and...well, I prefer your version of the st...History than that of the book!"

For a moment, the ghost actually did not move. Then it stood up and hovered over to his side, taking a seat next to him...as if a ghost could actually take a seat.

"Well Mr. Dursley, the battle of Grapplehook ended in a misty cold night, with the stars blazing for the winter of the twenty-third of December, whereas the tree's top moved gently by the strength of a light Zephyr breeze..."

Three hours later, Harry was leaving for dinner.

He realized that, probably, there was a reason he was more at ease speaking to portraits and ghosts than to the students around the castle: maybe it was because he hadn't grown up among them, that

he saw them as strange, or maybe it was because deep down he didn't consider them 'difficult' to talk to. They weren't humans, and it wasn't like they would lose something by answering him. Professor Binns probably had nothing else to do but 'float' around.

And if this made him a bit more of a 'Ravenclaw' and a bit more prepared, then where was the problem? He had also solved yet another problem of his: what to do during his spare time. Listening to the ghost speaking might have been boring per se, but taking notes helped in keeping him awake, and little by little he was sure he could change the boring tone to something 'Tolkien-like'.

"Good lass! Run for the dinner ahoy!" One of the portraits yelled at him as he stopped to catch his breath, panting strongly. The portrait was more of a drawing depicting windmills and a man in armor, on a donkey, and holding a lance. "Fighting the giants takes time and a full stomach!"

"You're...You're that guy who fought the windmills...wait...the name..."

"Don Chisciotte de la Mancia!" The guy on the horse exclaimed abruptly...before falling off the 'majestic' animal that indeed was a donkey. A donkey painted of dark brown...literally, within the portrait itself. How one could paint from within a painted painting...

"Yeah...I'm...I'm heading off to grab dinner."

"Good of you! You'd better hurry lest they start without you." The 'knight' explained, "And if you can't catch a bite, then there's always the kitchens for a late night snack!"

Harry raised an eyebrow, before muttering.

"I wouldn't want to...steal from the kitchens."

"Nonsense! The House Elves are happy to serve, and the food's there for the students! Seriously, nobody's going to miss a treacle tart or some toasts...of course you'd better reach it before curfew, since it's on the way down to the Hufflepuff dungeon's and behind the dead nature portrait and all."

"The Hufflepuff dungeons?" Why was it that Harry was starting to think more on the line of 'torture' devices? Weren't the Hufflepuff the loyal and kind ones? What the hell did they do in 'dungeons' to begin with?

"Oh well, more of a basement. Real cozy too! Can't tell you the way in I'm afraid...don't want Helga to Jinx me through the paintings...anyway...you're really going to be late you know?"

Harry nodded, before rushing off once more. He'd barely reach the hall in time, he knew it. In his rush, he did not look back behind him, because if he had, he'd realize that a vaguely familiar female silhouette had once more appeared from the painting, and had then proceeded to head once more downstairs...whistling.

Peeves was of course extremely peeved when he once again crossed with the ghost in question. Somebody was making the Grey Lady smile...the Bloody Baron was meant to know of this! Oh if he'd tell him!

Well...if only the Bloody Baron wasn't so Blood scary that it made him forget it. Better to launch dung bombs in the library, Madam Pince's yells were masterful works to hear.

As luck would have it, he wasn't the only one arriving late: a group of older Ravenclaws had apparently began studying for 'Owls' and 'Newts' whatever those things were, and as it turned out they were rushing too.

So of course...he ended up sitting right at the far end, surrounded by the oldest ones. Needless to say he had no idea what half of them were saying half of the time.

He did get nick-called 'Squirt' though...

All in all, also the second day should have been erased from his memory.

Author's notes

More hints.

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's conundrum 8

One day, a pretty nice lady from school had told the kids that they could be anything they wanted to be when they grew up, if they behaved themselves perfectly well and applied to whatever they did in earnest. Harry had naively asked if he would be able to fly and have laser eyes. Of course the nice lady had ignored his question, considering it childish, and had then proceeded to smile and congratulate another girl for wanting to become a veterinary.

Being a veterinary was so much not cool, in Harry's eyes at the time, that he had pouted and crossed his arms over his tiny chest, keeping quiet for a long time. He was such a sulker in his youngest days. The reason for this thought was maybe his subconscious trying to clear his conscience on regards of not having studied once the notes taken on Monday. Of course he had 'dabbled' with them in the library on Monday afternoon, while waiting for Hermione...but that hadn't pretty much mattered as 'studying'.

"That was maybe what, four years ago?" Harry muttered to himself, as he sat down to eat breakfast for once arriving on time. He was starting to speak to himself, considering how he appeared to be in some sort of metaphysical bubble whenever he walked from one spot to another, people ignoring him as he passed by. What was he, a sort of invisible leprechaun?

"We have potions today." A first year commented. It was the blond haired kid, wasn't it? Anthon something...Anthony? Antonius?

"Oh yeah." Harry replied numbly, proceeding to scarf down on toasts, croissant, tea and milk. "Thanks for the food." He whispered to no-one in particular. He had grown up with proper manners after all: you should always politely thank whoever prepared the food...and now that he knew it wasn't magic, but 'elves', then it made it even more so.

He half suspected the elves were able to become invisible at will: there was no other reason for the food to appear unless they could do that, and if that was the case, then they probably heard him alright.

Still, it appeared that Antonin...No, it was Anthony! Hadn't finished speaking.

"You think you'll get us some more points, Harry?"

"I don't know." He replied slowly, "We're still working on the boil soothing potion right?" A nod came his way and Harry shrugged. "I was lucky that time...I doubt it will happen again."

"Come on, we know you're a bookworm by now Dursley: make us proud!" It was Michael who spoke next, puffing his chest out like it was some sort of personal achievement to exclaim at him.

He nodded embarrassedly, but the gnawing feeling in the pit of his stomach didn't leave him at all. So, when indeed he actually managed to enter the class in time, and actually end up as a cauldron buddy of Neville, he was kind of more at ease.

After all, Neville was someone he knew and could work with.

As it turned out, instead, Neville was completely and utterly a fool when it came to potions: it was like he wasn't even reading the book, or he was skipping lines. The only thing Harry could do, as the potion began to turn a desperate and crimson red while the book stated it had to become green, and exhaling vapors that it shouldn't clearly exhale, was to grab the closest thing at hand and throw it in the cauldron; which, in retrospect, was kind of stupid but still far more helpful than whatever Neville was going to come up with.

The next few seconds passed by in a blur, as Harry had kept his eyes snapped shut in fear for an incoming explosion.

"Ehm...Harry? What did you throw in precisely?" Neville asked quietly, forcing him to slowly open his eyes to stare at the cauldron.

The cauldron was now a pool of pitch black darkness. Literally drifting around it as if it didn't matter...and then dispersing into nothingness, leaving behind an empty cauldron.

Completely empty of everything, blank slate, nothing in there even so remotely showing that the crimson potion of doom could have been contained inside of it.

"I think..." Harry took a deep breath, "That I threw in a bezoar." Scanning around the table, it took him less than a minute to confirm

that indeed, the chunk of bezoar he had so gingerly kept ready at hand for 'poisoning prevention' had apparently disappeared.

"Well...good thinking." Neville replied in a slightly embarrassed tone, "I'm sorry...I kind of..."

"Never mind," Harry sighed, "It can happen to everyone...maybe we can patch it up and start again? This time, however...please just read out to me the lines."

The truth behind the potion incident appeared clearly a few moments later.

"Neville. It's snake fangs, not shake hands." What was Neville reading, how to shake hands with the mortar?

"Ehm...well, then add the pine flower..."

"Neville." Harry narrowed his eyes, looking at the fumbling boy, "Let's swap again, shall we? Just follow my instructions."

Half the thoughts went to Neville being an analphabet, while the other half went to him simply not knowing how to read the Queen's English. Luckily, they had two hours of time, and even though they were forced to spend much time under the stares of those who had finished brewing it, by the end of the second hour they finally managed to complete it.

Taking a deep breath, Harry slumped on his desk with a light groan, before muttering slightly something about glasses and dyslexia.

"I'm sorry." Neville added once more.

"Not your fault." The boy groaned back, "I feel like hell though...what's the next class?"

"Herbology." The Hufflepuff supplied, "Our head of the house is the teacher for that: she's a really nice lady."

Nice bit of information Harry did not need at all. Still, maybe she would let him go to the infirmary if he felt worst?

"Sure she is." He muttered, before moving towards the professor's desk to hand over the potion.

"Mr. Dursley," Snape began while looking at him like a snake looks his prey. "I had hoped you would have finished sooner."

"I'm sorry professor, it was my fault." Neville began quickly, cringing.

"Pray tell what did you do?"

"I...I kind of misread the instructions...the potion was red and exhaling fumes and about to explode when Harry jumped in and threw..." At this moment, Harry gulped down nervously before muttering, his eyes sideways and staring at a really interesting brick in the wall.

"Bezoar."

"Yeah, he threw in a bezoar, and then puff the potion disappeared...so we had to start again."

The rest of the class had already delivered and left, a nice set of various degree colored potions stood lined up on the side of the professor's desk, and maybe it was luck that no-one else was there to stare at the blinking owlshly Snape.

Indeed, Severus Snape was blinking owlshly.

"You are telling me that the bezoar destroyed the entire potion, Mr. Longbottom?" He basically hissed those words out like his throat had been constricting.

"Y-Yes sir..." Neville had already taken a step backwards, by the time the potion master rose to his feet.

"You utterly...you...twenty points from Hufflepuff! You should have called me immediately! Do you have any idea what it means for a bezoar to destroy an entire potion!?"

"I'm sorry..." The Hufflepuff squeaked.

"No! Sorry doesn't cut it Mr. Longbottom! Mr. Dursley, why did you throw the bezoar in the cauldron? Why not something else?" As the

question was asked, Harry blinked for a moment, before his traitorous mouth took the better of him.

"Poison prevention. Keep it on myself and so I threw it...because if...it was poisonous, then it would stop being so?" There was the brief flickering of something behind Snape's eyes, something that Harry couldn't place quite well, but that still made the potion professor calm down considerably.

"I think it will be in the best interest of the class' safety that Mr. Longbottom be assigned as your steady potion partner...Mr. Longbottom." Snape spoke clearly, readdressing the Hufflepuff, "The potion you concocted was clearly highly toxic. Without mine or Mr. Dursley's intervention, you and those around you would have probably suffered from its effects. Doing potions is not merely following whatever your brains say would be 'cool' to throw within the cauldron while waving a stick around. Potion is a delicate and precise art. You were lucky: next time, follow the recipe clearly and to the letter. Are we understood?"

Neville nodded meekly, hoping this would soon end.

"For removing a threat from the classroom, displaying quick wits and actually making it in time to deliver another sample of the correct potion, I award thirty points to Ravenclaw." Having said that, Severus' eyes narrowed, "Well, what are you two still doing around here? Get going!"

Twin bolts shot out of the potion's classroom, stopping to take a breather only halfway through Hogwarts.

"I...I...What the hell?" Harry muttered. "Well...ha...let's not talk about that ever again, alright?"

Neville merely nodded. He didn't want the others to know he might have potentially brought the entire class to the infirmary...on the third day of school.

"Where's the Herbology class held, Lord Matthew?" Neville blinked at hearing Harry ask a painting on the wall next to them, a painting that actually smiled at being addressed and replied quite thoroughly.

"Lad! It's the greenhouses down and out from the castle! Go right and then right again, take the stairs down and while you're at it, ask Bessie if she needs a hand with her guests!"

"Aye sir!" Harry replied with a nod, before gesturing to Neville to follow him.

Neville could have told him where the greenhouses were...still it was probably the fact that he had nearly made them intoxicated that had brought Harry to ask a painting...of a navigator on a ship facing a cloudy and stormy horizon.

The Hufflepuff said nothing as Harry then spoke with what seemed to be a female corsair fighting off 'guests' in the form of merfolks armed with tridents, actually being pretty crass about it all.

"Lord Matthew helped me out yesterday in going to the history of magic class." He explained to Neville, as they made the final round to get to the greenhouses.

"And since he's a navigator...well, I thought he'd know his way around the castle."

Neville did not reply at that, simply choosing silence over embarrassing himself once more. At least he was pretty confident he would not suck in Herbology...he tended a garden at home, how much difficult could this be?

Harry, on the other hand, was glad to see that everyone was still waiting outside of the greenhouse. As he neared however he realized that whatever 'disturbance' had happened was gone: the students began to trickle in and head towards the giant table set within the glasshouse

"Well!" Pomona Sprout, a stocky and well-built lady that seemed the grandmotherly type by merely looking at her, exclaimed. "The first year is about hearing me talk about plants and you taking notes! This here is greenhouse one. Then there's greenhouse two, three and finally number four for the Newt level students. That said, I'm Pomona Sprout, and I sure hope you first years are ready to get your hands dirty!" She smiled too, just like someone who told a funny joke. "You won't of course end up fighting a devil's snare or a man-eating Cambogian plant! Still, I'm going to teach you how to

move normal flowers and grass from one pot to another, how to use manure and so on along the year! Don't make those faces lasses! Life's not only about nail polish!"

There was a chorus of snorts and chuckles coming from the male part of the class...albeit Harry had half a feeling the woman was speaking also to him. Touching manure? Wasn't manure...well...shit? They'd let him use gloves he hoped. Hell...even with gloves that was stretching it.

Why not let him use the wand?

Oh right: he couldn't even cast a spell as of yet.

"Now, take a seat and be ready to jolt down some notes! First off the Chrysanthemum family..."

If there was one thing Harry was sure about, it was that no, Herbology and he would not be together for a long time. Nice of knowing that the Daisies were called 'Chrysanthemum' something, but how did that help at all?

Shaking his head out of his boredom, he felt a soft encompassing feeling of coziness cover him by the time the lesson ended. Neville was even looking at him funnily.

What was he saying? 'You don't look well'.

Nev Pov.

"Harry? You hear me?" Neville's voice was a bit high pitched, because by the end of the lesson his friend's eyes had turned all glassy and a sort of cheesy cat grin had appeared on his lips.

"What's going on?" The voice belonged to a female girl of Gryffindor, who was a couple of seats further away. Apparently Lillian Potter was voicing her concern over the boy, Dursley. Neville didn't quite care about that, because he was still remembering the words of Professor Snape about how his potion had been toxic. Maybe he had exhaled the fumes of it?

If he had...

"Professor Sprout!" Neville quickly yelled getting the professor's attention, "I think Harry's not feeling well!"

"You come from Potions, right?" Pomona queried, before sighing and moving closer to Harry, tapping her wand against the boy's forehead. "Yeah...thought so. Worry not! Not the first time firsties get a potion wrong, exhale some fumes, and walk out without even wondering if they should visit the infirmary or not. Mr. Longbottom, nice sport of you to notice it: five points to Hufflepuff...I'll carry him over to Poppy in the infirmary."

Neville nodded numbly in relief, and a bit of guilt. Of course...the moment the professor left with Harry floating by her side, he was suddenly barraged by questions from the rest of the classroom.

"How the hell did he get to smell toxic fumes? He got points from Snape of all people!" A Ravenclaw suddenly exclaimed, forcing Neville to nervously swallow his pride and admit he might have botched up the potion.

"Longbottom! We lost how many points for that!?" Neville cringed...how the hell were they suspecting he had made them lose points?

"Let's not make a fuss of it." A girl, a Hufflepuff, muttered. "You heard professor Sprout, it's something normal and it happens every year."

"He'll miss the flying lessons...poor git." A Gryffindor with bright red hair had to snappishly remark.

"Say that again?" A Ravenclaw with blond hair suddenly mused, "What is it, jealous he got points from Snape and you didn't?"

"Ron, stop it." Lillian Potter suddenly said to the red haired boy, who Neville now knew was called 'Ron'.

"How the hell can I become jealous of that guy!? I barely even know him!" Ron's retort still didn't matter much, because by then a Slytherin blond boy had apparently decided to sneer at the Gryffindor.

"Why does your ignorance barely surprise me, Weasley?"

"Shut your trap you Slytherin!" a Hufflepuff barged in.

"Shut yours you half-squib!" another Slytherin exclaimed.

The next second, of course, it was chaos and wands were out.

"I think we should all calm down." Lillian began slowly, "Let's be reasonable...okay?"

Numbly, everyone looked at one another with a strange and eerie calm, before taking deep breaths and recomposing themselves. Their wands returned to their holsters, and things turned calm again.

Still, Neville couldn't help but be puzzled: why the hell had a riot nearly happened for Harry? He had expected some murmuring...not a near outright chaos to execute a second after his disappearance.

He wasn't the smartest guy...but he too found it strange. Then again...maybe he was well liked by the other Ravenclaws? Still...something was off. It wasn't his business however: it clearly definitively wasn't his business. So he'd let it drop for now: not like Harry Dursley was anyone worthy of being remembered for a long time, was he?

Author's notes

More hints. (Getting morose with the more hints thing, so I'll reply to a couple of reviews)

The first person switch was unintended. I kind of write on 'multiple fronts' at the same time, so I inadvertently switched the person.

I'm happy you reviewers like the 'slow' and 'smooth' build up. I'm pretty sure that eventually I will have to make a time skip, (to get to October and beyond) but till then I'm writing this for the purpose of 'slow and tranquil'.

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 9

Harry's ears caught on an indistinctive mumbling and buzzing, before he finally managed to open his eyes and stare at a blurry figure that was probably looking back at him.

"You alright?" The voice buzzed, her hair tied in a pony-tail of a red color. Next to her another figure, leaner and with a strange nun-like dress was looking at him sternly, if the blur on her face was actually that of stern.

"Am fine..." He mumbled, feeling drowsy still.

"Alright...I'll write to your mother and..." the voice felt far off, as he dropped once more into the nice embrace of sleep.

Finally, when he awoke once more, it was in the midst of the night.

"What hit me?" He asked to no-one in particular.

"Toxic fumes, lad." The nurse's voice was just as gruff as her demeanor, but at least he could now see her clearly, albeit the candlelight wasn't of the best sources.

"Bezoar?" He suggested.

"Already in your stomach. Working just fine." The healer added, before commenting, "You had a couple of visitors, left you stuff on the bed desk: carry it with you tomorrow morning when you leave for your classes."

"Okay." He whispered back, before turning his gaze to the right, and then to the left, where indeed on the bed desk stood what appeared to be a book, and a couple of letters.

His hand moved to grab a letter, and at the light of the candle nearby he slowly began to read it. It was more of a parchment actually, just a brief note coming from Neville who said how sorry he was, and how he was going to get a copy of the notes for astronomy for him later on, and not to worry.

He then proceeded to look at the other parchment, that apparently belonged to his cousin.

Cousin! Darn it! I wanted to speak to you at flying, since it's uncle Sirius' lesson he wouldn't have made a fuss about us chatting in the background. You got saddled with the Longbottom huh? Well, he clearly has some sort of motor deficiencies, (yeah! I know that word duh!) since he nearly fell from the broom today, thankfully Uncle Sirius was there and stopped his fall with a levitation charm.

A pity you couldn't fly with us today, you would have loved it!

PS: Uncle Sirius said he's going to try and get me in the Quidditch team as a first year: the Gryffs are in need of a seeker after all...I can't wait! He also gave me thirty-five Gryffindor points for having flown 'spectacularly'. Of course those bloody Slytherins had to whine about it, so instead he gave me seven times five point!

Get better soon,

your cousin,

L.P.

Harry rolled his eyes before grabbing the book and looking at the cover.

He blinked for a second, before letting his hand pass over the leather cover of the title to make sure he was reading it right.

"Pureblood supremacy throughout the ages, by Abraxas Malfoy."

"Oh." He muttered. Draco had actually gone as far as getting him the equivalent of the Mein Kampf, only for the magical Nazis.

Slowly, he peered open the first pages, deciding that if sleep hadn't claimed him yet, he wouldn't be claimed for a few minutes more.

"It is with heavy mind that I decide to write this book, for the minds of those who willfully ignore the greatest threat that Great Britain has yet to face; that is, of course, muggleborns. This book is dedicated to Lucius Malfoy, my son, so that he may grow proud of his blood and of the power of magic."

The index of the book contained a detailed set of dates, upon which all possible magical accidents had happened because of muggleborns, ranging from setting off ancient runic temples, ruining priceless statues because of accidental bouts of magic, to risking the infringement of the statute of secrecy.

"It is not that muggleborns should be purged, albeit it would be preferable, it is that they bring forth change that is, indeed, against the moral principles of magic itself. Magic demands for a hill to remain a hill, so when a muggleborn decides to build upon it, and make a house with magic, he offends magic. Whereas a Pureblood knows where to build a hill and where not, because his education has brought him insight, the risks of the muggles' spawn is too great for..."

And then Harry simply moved his eyes across a particular page, which apparently held some strange reddish words.

"The truth behind the Pureblood's ideals is the complete and utter desire to maintain control through stagnancy, that much must be made clear to all those who hold upon themselves the title of last of their lines, and as such they are able to read these words, that I leave to only those whose pure blood and heir status can be discerned through means of magic."

"You've got to be kidding me." He muttered, before starting to turn the pages quickly.

Indeed, seven pages later, a small note in a corner related how the accident that involved a muggleborn witch had been started by the crude remarks of a 'less than pure' pureblood, who needed to be cultivated in order for the Pureblood's ideals to remain such.

Few pages down the line again, and another scribble dictated how to recognize the signs of inbreeding, and how to fight them by having some 'controlled' wizards and witches birthed through at least three generations of magic-parents always at hand for marriage interviews and contracts.

Harry gaped at the sheer amount of stuff that was written in red.

The ink, black as it was, displayed the basics of a Nazism theology, but the red words illustrated why it had come to be like that with

clear-cut reasoning and cold logic. Basically, it was completely and utterly different from merely reading Mein Kampf: it was like reading it with an author's commentary, one that apparently was being objective in his shrewdness of keeping the 'nobles' atop the commoners.

Harry, slowly and hesitantly, closed the book and set it aside.

So, he had been in the 'magical' world for three days.

In those three days he had been late, suffered from toxic fumes, been ignored or randomly brought to glory, he had saved himself by the skin of the teeth with a potion, gotten a friend if Neville could be counted as such, and apparently they were trying to get him recruited into the Magical Nazi party.

"Joy to the world...the headache has come." He muttered the Christmas' carol first words, before taking a deep breath and closing his eyes...he'd figure everything out the next morning, probably.

As it turned out, the next morning he was up and about even before the start of breakfast. Madame Pomfrey had been most kind in informing him he would need his books and stuff for the lessons from his dormitory, and so he had left still dressed with the clothes of the day before, at five in the morning.

Of course, the castle was as chilly as it could ever be.

"Brr...isn't there a heating system around here?" He muttered under his breath, clouds of condensed air forming from his lips.

...cold...

"Eh?" Harry turned around, raising an eyebrow before looking at the paintings near the hallway, "Any of you said something?"

"Wonderful morning dearie." A seemingly elderly grandmother said, while holding a needle and some thread and knitting up a scarf, "You seem a little chilly you know? A good warm cup of chocolate does wonders for the cold!"

"I'll take that in mind madam." He replied, "But they don't serve hot chocolate for breakfast, do they?"

"Course they do dearie! You just have to ask the cup!" The old woman replied with a light smirk, "Most things can be obtained by politely asking, it's all in the manners you know?"

"Thank you madam. I'm sorry but I'm kind of in a hurry, so..."

"Of course dearie: off you trot!" Harry left the elderly lady with a smile...so he only had to ask?

Maybe he'd get his favorite breakfast of all: hot chocolate with chocolate muffins! For a devastating combination of sweetness and utter lack of calorie control...at least, his father used to tell him about how 'if an apple a day keeps the doctor away, then chocolate calls a swarm of dentists back...and medics too.'

In any case, he actually managed to get to the dormitories without meeting anyone else, except of course politely saying hello to the paintings along the way, or waving at them as he moved.

As he entered through the knocker, who still had the old riddle on, he stilled. People were actually sleeping in the common room, some covered in books and others apparently wherever they could stay. They all looked like the sixth years and the fifth ones, words like 'The Owls will get you' or 'NEWt pain, NEWt gain' were scribbled all around. In a corner, near the window, a rooster was laying asleep right next to a clock, while the painting of the lady who had been kind of him was depicting said woman smiling fondly, nodding at him with a wink before gesturing for silence.

He blinked a moment, before nodding back to the painting of Helena, and then slowly making his way back to his room and drop off the stuff he was carrying, taking great care of putting the book with the Magical Nazism theories. He had decided that if he had to think about 'purebloods' he'd just go all out and call them magical Nazis.

It actually made them slightly less scary, because the sheer impossibility of it, at least before he knew of magic, made it funny rather than scary.

Mentally, he promised himself he'd look into the second world wide war by the wizard's perspective, but till then, he prepared for charms.

By the time he was washed up and ready, breakfast time had come around...meaning it was seven o'clock, and he, together with the oldest students who had woken up at that time thanks to the strangely well placed rooster in the room, ended up going for breakfast as early as possible.

"Who's smart idea was that of the rooster?" Penelope began to talk as soon as they ended up being seated.

"See? Even the prefect likes it." A Ravenclaw replied, his cheek had scribbled on the side the words 'May 1276' in ink, probably the result of having it imprinted on from his sleeping position.

"I was being sarcastic." Penelope retorted quickly, "Only cats, owls or toads are allowed in the common rooms."

"Actually...first years are allowed only those, second upwards it isn't stated." Another student piped in, "And even if it was...we could ask professor Flitwick. I doubt he'd go on a murderous rampage for a rooster of all things."

As the older years bickered and talked, Harry looked at his cup and the food around. Quietly, in a low murmured voice, he whispered.

"Hot chocolate, please?"

The next moment, he was rewarded with his cup slowly filling up with the brown warm liquid that he quickly consumed, nearly scathing his tongue in the process.

Leaving little to nothing to his experiment, he asked with a please for chocolate muffins, and was promptly rewarded.

He thanked whatever sort of magical thing or ability brought the stuff, and then headed off, with a good bit of time to kill, towards the charm's class. As luck would have it, the class had already been prepared with the feathers, for those who still had to get the Wingardium Leviosa working. A wide amount of paper stood hanging upon professor Flitwick's desk, but since physics had deemed the pile unworthy of the laws of gravity, so too had he.

So, with the utmost calm and control he could muster, and with the most decisive intent he could manage to focus, he walked straight to

his desk and pointed his wand at the feather, the white feather in front of him, and whispered.

"I will make you fly today. Mark my words!" And then, narrowing his eyes, Harry went through the movements and hissed, "Wingardium Leviosa!"

This time, the feather twitched.

"Yes!" And then the feather flew down. Probably it hadn't been heavy enough to stay down against his breathing, which, of course, meant that he hadn't yet mastered the spell.

In any case, he quickly scampered to get the feather and put it back up at his desk, when the door of the classroom swung open for a moment.

"Accio notes!" A female voice exclaimed, and then, by the time Harry had stood back up to look around, the door had closed once more.

With a heartfelt sigh of regret, Harry looked over at his wand.

"Well? What do you have to say for yourself huh?"

"Something like 'I'm powerful and need no silly tricks' stuff? No? Huh?" For the love of god, he was talking to a wand! A stick of wood!

"Come on...at least let the feather twitch a bit! I'm doing it all right! How hard can it be to swing you around? I mean it! Just work would you!?"

Of course, the stick of wood did not reply.

Giving out a hint on how it worked would have been too easy, and thus the wand remained strongly silent.

"You know what? To hell with you." He muttered. "I'm going to try something else." With that said Harry opened his charms book, reaching for the most complicated spell of the arsenal.

"Let's see you doing this then. Come on!" Waving his wand slowly, but rhythmically, he began a long drawn set of flourishes and air-pentagrams that finally terminated with the wand movement of the 'piercing' motion.

"Annihilo!"

The classroom, the empty devoid of life classroom...remained unscathed and untouched.

On another side-related note, Harry quickly closed the charm book and began to utter foul curses of how much of an idiot he had been to even try something like that. 'Annihilo' was a spell the wizards used to tear down castle walls! It was a siege spell for heaven's sakes!

As the first students trickled in, Harry knew it: he was in for another morning of complete and utter embarrassment.

Just what the hell did his wand want to work!?

Author's notes

Of course Harry's wand won't be something 'said to be difficult' but that is then suddenly 'easy' the next chapter.

Expect him to curse. And swear. All of course with the happy-go lucky 'mention but don't explain'.

More hints have been dropped (Really, I should stop saying this sentence, since I'm practically dropping them everywhere!)

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's conundrum 10

The class was soon filled with people, all sitting down calmly at the very same seats of the last time. All except for Draco who, apparently, had ended up sitting elsewhere. So, right about then, Harry was sitting alone in the corner of the classroom.

He sighed, before starting to look through his charms book once more, quietly hoping...

Wait, was that a war spell right there...again?

His eyes narrowed for a moment, and he closed the book in front of him. The title of the book wasn't 'The standard book of spells' to begin with: it was 'Battle spells throughout the ages'.

He looked around frantically, before opening up his bag and sighing in relief: his book was there, tucked away safely. Harry was thus free to pursue the second part of the problem: where the hell had that book come from?

Carefully, he pried open the first pages with care, searching for some sort of footnote or scrawling that would help him identify the owner. At the first page, written with blotches of ink more than actual nouns, stood two words: Hel-Claw, which of course helped little: on one side he only had three letters, and on the other he only had four.

Maybe he should actually start reading the books instead of skimming over the pages, looking for the most complicated spell there was.

Looking at the book on war spells with a bit more of an eye it had become clearer that it just couldn't have been the same. For one thing, the book had a black leather cover and the title was golden. Secondly, it held far more pages than the old one.

Maybe he was still a bit dizzy after the night at the infirmary...but just as the professor began once more explaining the charm and its benefits, adding to it how it could be used to fly too...Harry raised an eyebrow.

It could be used to fly?

"And now, please practice among yourself." The door of the classroom opened then, revealing precisely the last person who had to enter: Lillian herself. She had probably run late for some sort of reason, and as she sheepishly murmured her excuse to the professor, she moved to the only free spot remaining. The one right next to him...it was official: the world hated him.

What was he supposed to say? 'Hello? How are you, cousin dearest? I'm so glad you earned points for blatant favoritism? Did killing you-know-who make you feel emotional turmoil? How the hell did you kill him to begin with?'

"Hi." He grumbled with a light nod. Perfect. There was always a need for grouchy persons in the world, and apparently he was going to fit the bill, at least in Lillian's eyes.

"Hey!" Lillian smiled back at him, showing off her entire dentition as she did so. "How's Hoggy Hogwarts treating you?" She asked, referring to what the talking hat had sung at the entrance ceremony.

"Good." He replied with a bit of hesitation, and monotone. It couldn't be that difficult to speak to a cousin, could it?

"Alright then." She quickly said, before moving to her task at hand of trying to levitate the feather.

Hers at least twitched, while Harry's simply remained dead...as dead as a plucked feather from a chicken could stay dead that is.

"You sure you're focalized?" Lillian whispered to him, raising an eyebrow. "I mean...convinced and all?"

"What?" He replied with a flustered expression, he didn't need someone's help to do it for the love of...he was going to make it! He had tried asking once, and it hadn't helped. Why would this be any different from before?

"Now, from what they told me, you need to focalize on the feather, believe it will float, and then use the spell with all the movements right...of course you must also have the intent on it or it won't float...really a lot of it." Just to prove her point, she whispered the charm one more time, earning a slightly floating feather that lifted maybe of a millimeter or two...far more than his 'dead' one at least.

Harry rolled his eyes, before slowly and deliberately eying the feather.

He could do this. Magic was real, magic was really real and everything attached. He could do magic, the feathers could lift with the charm; he could pretty damn much make the darn thing in front of him float if he willed it enough. So, once more, he moved his wand.

"Wingardium Leviosa." His face was as concentrated as he could make it, and finally, finally for the first time since the beginning of the lesson, the feather twitched a bit.

The others already had their feathers floating; some of the late ones had theirs on a level far more than twitching, yet it didn't matter to him.

The damn thing twitched.

He could do magic.

He could make magic work!

He was a bloody damn wizard who could make feathers twitch!

...what a wonderful potential.

Harry took a deep sigh, realizing only then that he had been smiling like he had just won the lottery.

"Thank you." He whispered back to Lillian, who apparently was a bit...asleep? Because the next moment she blinked twice, before shaking her head slowly.

"No problem at all cous...can I call you Harry?" she suddenly exclaimed, like she wanted to cover the previous words of her mouth and eying pretty badly her surroundings...where people were looking at her.

"Ehm...yes?" He replied with a nod.

"Good...I need to talk to you after the lesson alright?" At the question, he nodded once more, before returning to his feather. He had made the thing twitch!

He still couldn't believe it, but he had made the thing twitch and now, now was the time to make it soar through the air!

"Wingardium Leviosa." Of course, the feather merely twitched once more.

Lowering his head with a deep sigh, he began to muster his determination...it was going to be a hell of a long road.

By the time the charm lesson finished, his feather could do the twitching dance for a few seconds.

He had never thought it could be mentally exhausting and taxing to even go as far as make a feather twitch whereas it should have flown, but still...

As the class was emptying, the red haired boy that Harry had seen a lot of times hanging around Lillian literally pushed him aside to get to his cousin's proximity. Well, not actually 'pushed' as more of a: 'I'm a freight train; move or I'll end up knocking you down'. Harry knew the types since he had known quite a few in elementary school; they weren't evil per se, but they just didn't know tact.

"Ron! Can you get to the dining hall and hold on a seat for me please? I've got to speak with Harry for a moment."

"Oh, that's alright." And then, of course, he lingered for a bit before a death glare from Lillian sent him scampering on his way. Lillian then turned towards him, and whispered.

"He's a good guy...bit dull but nobody's perfect...anyway...you heard anything about me?" She asked him, making Harry blink for a moment.

"Concerning...what?"

She gave him a stare of death too, before sighing.

"Right, you grew up with muggles...makes this even easier then: I'm sort of the wizard's world heroine." She began, ending up with a big digression on what happened and who You-Know-Who was.

"Voldemort? He's called Voldemort? The magical Nazi is called Voldemort?" Harry asked to make sure. "At least 'Adolf Hitler' sounded menacing. Voldemort doesn't sound menacing...heck, Mortimer would be totally better."

"Yeah...anyway, please don't tell anyone about me if they ask alright? I've got little privacy as it is..." as she said that she rolled her eyes at the sight of some older year students pointing and murmuring probably about her a bit further away, "and I really liked talking to someone who didn't idolize me like 'the girl who lived' or such...so please?"

"Alright cousin..." He nodded back, before raising an eyebrow, "Now that I think about it, why not just avoid calling ourselves with 'cousin' to begin with? That way we can be acquaintances and nobody would find it strange and ask questions on my family."

"Yeah, let's do that then!" And with a bright cheerful smile, Lillian dashed off.

They could have gone to the dining hall and do transfiguration together, so why did she have to leave in a hurry? They could have at least walked together towards the hall...or maybe she just didn't want to be seen walking next to him? It kind of hurt to be ignored in such a way, but he shrugged it off: the girl had said she had enjoyed talking with him, hadn't she?

So, after heading off to lunch which, unluckily, could not be changed to his pleasure,

His steps were steady but slow, as by the time he got into Transfiguration, sitting down in the last row, the professor soon followed a few seconds later.

Minerva McGonagall was the Gryffindor's head of the house, and she looked every bit of the stern lady she could muster herself to be, if her words on 'expelling from the lesson' all those who made trouble were true. Her tone carried her truth at least, and he wasn't going to antagonize the woman if he could avoid it.

This time, matches appeared in front of them.

"Transfiguration is easier said than done," the woman began to explain.

Harry merely rolled his eyes: why he'd say the same thing about charms or anything concerning wand movements, because nothing was easy to him at the present where magical hocus pocus was involved.

"The easiest type is transfiguring matches to needles, and vice-versa. One must always keep straight in mind what he wants to obtain, and..." mathematical formulas filled the chalkboard few seconds later, and then they were left to try, with the professor walking through the classroom like a vulture ready to devour the corpses of the fools who displeased it.

Transfiguration was all about wand movement and intent, since no words were actually needed for it. He just had to picture a needle, in the place of his match.

Slowly he brought his mind to the same level of determination he had held when trying the Wingardium Leviosa. He could do this. He would do this. He was a wizard and he would succeed.

The tip of his wand tapped the match, and the next second...the match disappeared.

He blinked once, before slowly looking around. Did he perhaps push it down from the desk? He lowered his head beneath it, and when he brought it back up...

There was a book where first there had been the match.

His eyes narrowed: this was already the second time something of his fell down, distracting him and making him look around, and by the time he looked back up a book mysteriously appeared in its place.

This was starting to get annoying.

Did he have some sort of secret admirer going around?

This book was entitled 'Transfiguration for war: one hundred and one mutations to unleash upon thy enemies'.

He 'sacked' the book to begin with, and then began to ponder as a match rolled by on his desk, coming from absolutely nowhere.

Harry decided that this was all about magic, and nothing more.

So, taking a deep breath, he started once more: he'd get a needle in the place of a match before the end of the day, he was sure of it!

Of course...why did he keep putting up on his hope? The match remained as such all throughout the lesson, not even taking on a glimmer of metal. With a sigh, he actually pocketed the match. Maybe he could use it for lighting up his wand and trying the 'intimidation' approach on the piece of stick he carried around.

Great potential at a great effort...the effort was starting to become more and more of a sort of humiliation, daily and repeatedly, rather than some sort of well worked 'Rambo-like' evolution. Rambo just needed a bit of music and some stairs to climb...real life sucked.

He walked out of the classroom alone, as usual. He'd take his chance with the library now: he had that bit of a side project concerning the second world wide war after all.

As luck would have it, he had been perfectly and utterly right.

There had been, indeed, Nazi wizards. Their greatest supporter, their leader, had been a certain Grindelwald, defeated by Albus Dumbledore in 1945...and then the war had ended soon afterwards.

So the second world wide war had been fought between wizards, but who had actually started it this time around?

He scrunched his face deep in thought, as he began to peruse through the books like he was kind of possessed. What the hell was he doing in the library? He should have been going around exploring, like the other eleven years old, or maybe he should have gone and practice some more...yet this had caught his interest...because he could relate.

He had grown up among the 'muggles' and thus he was more keen on discovering the 'hidden' story of the world rather than study magic that didn't come easily at him. Everyone could move a wand around, but considering the low number of students in the library, only a few valued the history as well as he appeared to be doing.

Then there was the trouble with the old looking books somebody was trying to set him up with. What reason they could have eluded him, but he had yet to find any clue on it, except the fact that they kept on popping up.

He could swear there was at least another book within his bag by now, probably placed when he wasn't looking.

It was only through sheer luck that he managed to realize that time had indeed passed long enough for him to have to go to dinner. After dinner, he headed off towards his room and sat on his bed, lazily flipping open the pages of the book on transfiguration.

This one, instead of a blotched line of names, held a particular flourish of a signature. It was kind of difficult to decipher, but it did end with a small stylized snake that opened its fangs.

Looking into his book bag, he realized he hadn't been imagining things: there were more books.

Something, somewhere deep down, told him that as a 'school' this still wasn't the norm around. Something was up, and whatever it was, it apparently wanted him to be well instructed.

The books...he widened his eyes, before settling in a slight grin.

Now it was obvious! What an idiot he had been not to realize before! There was only one person who had ever gifted him a book: the potion professor! It had to be professor Snape, who knew his mother, and thus was trying to help him out by giving him books to read.

Taking a deep breath of relief, and shaking his head of all those stupid idiotical crap like 'prepare for a final battle' or 'fight in a war' or similar, he began to gingerly read the first few pages of the book entitled 'Curses from the dark ages to the dark enlightenment' and 'Potions for the rulers of darkness'...which appeared kind of shady,

but the first few pages were nothing more than warnings and some general overlay.

Nothing strange in there, was it?

And Professor Snape was a professor after all, he wouldn't hand out prohibited books like they were candy, would he?

He had double potions the next day...he'd ask clarifications then.

Author's notes

Hints, hints. Of course I warned you at the first chapter that what happens and what one says are highly 'biased' on the pov.

Meaning that a distracted character will understand one thing and a keen one another.

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 11

The morning proved him wrong on the table's ability to deliver chocolate muffins at will. Apparently, when he politely whispered for chocolate, he got back...steamed veggies.

Harry didn't actually make a fuss, eating it quickly before praying for some milk and biscuits and getting his wish granted. Apparently the table worked on some sort of mystical 'health equivalent exchange'. One day one could order deep fried baby seal fat, but the other he'd be forced on a mystical diet made of tofu and prickled bamboo sprouts.

At least, that was as he envisioned the thing...albeit he doubted they'd serve him baby seal fat fried in oil...they couldn't have that in the kitchens, could they?

"You don't have baby seal fat in the kitchens, do you?" He actually had to ask to the now empty plate, earning himself a mental groan when no reply came. Now he was going to spend the rest of the day pondering if they actually had baby seal fat in the kitchens.

Then, as if on cue, he arrived late once more for potions. It was some sort of bizarre reasoning of his internal clock: either he arrived extremely early or extremely late but still on the clock. He couldn't get there say, five minutes early. He had to be there at least half an hour or an hour early.

There were no cauldrons this time around, only tables. Meaning that this was, indeed, a take notes lesson time. It was also a Friday and for him, it actually brought back elementary school and his 'literature' teacher. Literature was more frankly story reading, but it held quite a bit of penmanship, and since she did have five hours in the morning of it, do to having double hours...this was nothing his hand couldn't take.

Apparently he was the only one. It was a little thing to take pride on, but if half the groans he heard from the others were of any meaning, they would be feeling the pain until Monday. The trick he used to take notes was quite simple actually: he just dozed off and left his hand to go on autopilot all the way till the end. It was a no-brainer solution and it worked, as long as something didn't disrupt his

concentration, forcing him to return to reality like being tapped on the shoulder by a hand.

A hand that belonged to a blond boy who had actually taken the seat next to him, and was clearly waiting for him to speak or say something of importance...strange, because he could have sworn there was another kid next to him a few minutes before...oh, the first part of the lesson had ended. They were on the lunch break.

"I've been reading the book," Harry murmured, "Even the red parts." He added.

"Red parts?" Draco raised an eyebrow, curious.

"Yeah...the guy, Abraxas, said they were visible only to last living heirs of pureblood families who had no-one to explain stuff to them." At those words, Draco's eyes bulged, before quickly looking around frantically.

"Shhhhh." The blond boy hissed, "Don't speak of that here! I didn't think you were that pure...well, anyway...you just wasted all of my time preparing for a grand speech and...argh...I'm not good at this. Father said it would be easy but I've got the dumbest of lucks..." Draco was babbling one moment, and the next he had his mouth shut and his features extremely pale. Harry returned his gaze forward, and frowned slightly at the sight of Lillian looking their way, with Ron displaying some sort of scowl.

"Anyway, want to go get a bite?" Draco inquired, and as Harry nodded back on reflex, they both stood up and left after he packed his stuff. He'd talk to the professor after the second part...he had all day after all: he'd manage to thank the man for his books, would he?

The fact that Draco wasn't leading them towards the school's cafeteria had to mean something...was there some sort of café within the school he knew not of? It could be: the size of the school was after all pretty impressive. By the time they descended towards the dungeons however, he realized where they were going.

The portrait of dead nature came into view and as Draco tickled...with cooing noises attached, the pear, the door opened. Well, no. More than a door opening it was the portrait that swung

apart to outright reveal an enormous amount of tables upon which strange creatures were cooking and preparing food.

In a corner of the room, eating what appeared to be a long amount of sandwiches, was the Ravenclaw prefect right next to the Slytherin prefect, both apparently murmuring something about 'bloody idiots' and 'Weasley twins'. Nearby, a Hufflepuff prefect was...brooding, and drinking himself into oblivion. At least, the vast amount of beer-shaped bottles made it pretty clear.

"And that's why there's a need for some pixie dust." Basileus remarked drily at the Slytherin prefect, who banged his head against the table.

"I'm going to die..."

"Come on! It's not that bad...Newts are the NEW-Tomorrow after all!"

"Basileus, I'll kill you...slowly, and darkly." The Prefect deadpanned, before grumbling something unintelligible as Harry and Draco took to a small round table near them.

The strange brown creatures zoned their eyes on them, and for a dreadful second Harry felt like having holes carved on all of his body.

"Master Draco brought a friend! How can Dobby help!?" The creature literally jumped up and down, excited like a...three year old on a sugar rush.

"Dobby, this is Harry. Harry, this is Dobby, my personal house elf." As soon as those words left Draco's mouth, Harry's mind cracked.

For a brief instant he could actually see the elves of World of Warcraft look at him.

It was a moment, then they were replaced by those strange brown things that resembled goblins and...and some sort of beaten to near death poodle dog with enormous eyes.

"Oh..." He gasped for air a moment later, shock probably visible on his face, "I...I see then. Pleasure to meet you, Dobby."

"Master Draco's friend is too kind, sir! How can Dobby be of assistance to Master Draco and Master Draco's friend?" The...the elf...no. This went against Tolkien itself: it would not stand. The Goblin squeaked.

The goblin was actually quite happy to take the orders of Draco and...his too, and even those in the kitchens proper didn't seem to mind one bit.

"House elves," Draco began.

"Goblins." Harry deadpanned.

"What do Goblins have to do now?" Draco asked back perplexed.

"Nothing; carry on...I'm just feeling a bit dead inside..." Harry whispered.

"Well...so you actually read that? My father told me of what was supposed to be written there, but it was some sort of 'ultimate' fool proof contingency plan...just for the most horrible of situation to come by and...well...you've got a hell of a lot to learn then." There was something in Draco's tone that made Harry perplexed. It was...pity.

"Can't I have the quick version?" Harry's tone was pleading, but he was eleven years old...what the hell did they want from him? Was this like those sorts of medieval things he studied at school, with the kids learning etiquette and all that stuff since they could talk and speak? He refused. He'd be the modern medieval noble.

"Sorry...you should just keep reading the book I gave you: you can keep it since I've got more copies than I could possibly ever read...really." Draco shook his head slightly, before mulling over a thought. "There was something I wanted to ask you...but I can't remember, so it wasn't important I suppose."

They chit-chatted about nothing, like the fact that apparently 'The Magical Nazi' party was nothing more than a banner under which unite to just...pursue the interests of control. He was after all speaking with a Magical Nazi Kid...if he got it right.

By the time lunch was done, they both headed back to potions wholly satisfied and appeased. The only thing Harry decided to remember however was that, indeed, he could take his leisurely time and ignore invitations to nobility parties.

It was as he sat down at his seat, that a giant, titanic thought struck him dead-on in the back of the head: why the hell was he the last heir of a magical pureblooded family if he still had family alive!? What the damn frigging hell!?

If he still had an...uncle, who had a child, then why was he a heir with no family left? He began to wrack his brain around the issue, in the time that it took for the potion professor to arrive in the classroom.

Silently, he began to churn out solutions: his defense against the dark art teacher was Potter, male. Meaning that he had to be his father's brother...now, from what little he remembered of Nobility's heritage rules, the oldest one was always right. So...his father had died, and had been the oldest. So then the mantle of heir had passed on to him...but then why was he considered by the book's magic as the sole heir with no family left?

He...He thought about it while writing down about Valerian roots and Aconite, before reaching to the point of how it was better to cast within the cauldron smashed roots instead of chopped up ones, for the...

Cast out. They had been disinherited, the whole lot of them! That was the reason! It was so simple! Harry suddenly felt the need to yell an 'eureka' and dance around...in his mind, of course. The younger brother had done something stupid, and had been disinherited, leaving only the older one and by consequence him as the sole family and heir to the house.

So...he was what, Lord Potter?

He shivered at that. 'Lord Potter' seemed like a high-strung name for a mark of toilet paper. 'Fear not the potty, with Lord Potter's brand mark of paper! So soft, it's lord approved!'

Harry clamped a hand on his mouth, to suppress a stifle. Lord Dursley: now that was a harsh and stern surname that would make

people start respecting him. Harry James Dursley. Lord Harry James Dursley.

He went back to politely taking notes on what the professor was speaking of, and when the lesson finished, he stood up making his way towards the potion master. Snape had seen him coming forward, because he did not rush out of the classroom as usual, but waited until he got closer to raise a puzzle eyebrow.

"I...I wanted to thank you for the books, professor." Harry replied, fidgeting on the spot. He wasn't used to thanking professors for delivering books in secret.

The man nodded quietly, before replying sternly.

"Mr. Dursley, you already thanked me once: there is no...did you say books? As in, more than one?" The tone was curious, but controlled.

"Y-Yes, professor." He nodded quickly. "I've been reading them for a bit now...were they my mother's too?" He asked.

"Mr. Dursley..." The potion master's next words didn't come, because the man's face contorted into a frown, then a glare, then finally a quick nod, all while his eyes settled like drills onto his. "No, they weren't." He began slowly, "However I am sure they will be helpful. I'm glad you made a good friend with..." Severus' voice stopped for a moment, a hint of a smile on his face before adding, "Draco."

"Oh, yes...he's been helping me out with everything and..." He bit his tongue: there was no need to speak with the professor of being the heir of a noble pureblood family, was there?

"Good. Hogwarts is a place where friendships should be cultivated...if there is nothing else..."

"You knew my mother." Harry blurted out, flustered. "Could we...speak of her? One day?"

"I thought 'Tuney' would have told you about her..." Severus drawled out, visibly angry.

"She did, but not about magic...she said nothing about it so I don't know what my mother did at school and..."

The professor looked at him for a moment, before slowly nodding and gesturing towards the door to the side of the potion lab.

"Follow me then, Mr. Dursley...I just so happen to have a bit of time. Do you enjoy tea?" With a nod, Harry followed; what came to be for the next hour was a strange tea-time with glass beakers warmed up over a cauldron's fire. Little tidbits of information on what his mother was during school and in the areas she excelled at, nothing grand, nothing really important but...it was soothing.

At least now he knew something more about her, if only he had some sort of photo except those of when she was together with her sister, then everything would be complete...but he dared not to ask his professor.

"And in fifth year she began to hang around with Potter," he supplied carefully, his tone turning slightly grim. "We lost contact for a while after that," he added, "but we patched up things later on, during the war against you-know-who..."

"Who started that war?" Harry asked, blurting it out before he could even snap his mouth it shut.

"What do you mean?" The professor's eyes narrowed for a second, his lips already forming a slight scowl.

"I was looking in the library about the second world wide war, the wizard side of it anyway...and so...I mean, the question just came out on its own." He supplied swiftly.

"He-Who-Shall-Not-Be-Named, You-Know-Who, or Voldemort," the potion master stopped for a moment, eying him carefully before displaying a small smile and continuing his talk, "began harassing muggles and muggle-born wizards and witches in the 1970s, calling himself the Dark Lord, and his believers the Death Eaters. Of course when I speak of harassing I intend terrorism, if the word is better suited for your understanding." The potion master spoke clearly and a bit hesitantly, "They were feared because of their use of the Unforgivable curses, of the beasts they brought under their folds...at one time Giants and Werewolves allied with him, and there was fear

the Goblins would soon follow..." Harry listened keenly, taking the words of the man to heart but...

It just sounded like the usual war talk. His grandfather, John Dursley, had fought in the war and invaded Germany during the fall of the Reich. He had always been tightlipped on what his actions had been, but if there was one thing he stated, always, was that debris and blood were the same on both sides, and that wars didn't start for ideals: they started for pretty damn good reasons.

"So he only did it because he hated muggles?" Harry queried, curious.

"...Yes." There was a little moment of hesitance, within professor's Snape's final admission, that made him curious. The professor probably picked it up, because after a quick glance at him, he suddenly stood up.

"I held you long enough Mr. Dursley: you should be heading off to dinner soon."

Harry excuses himself quickly, thanking once more the professor for the time, but he did not head off towards the dining hall.

If there was one thing he had understood by then, it was that a lot of people tended to outright ignore him: even the guys of his own house did little more than walk past him now...was he really that much invisible? Maybe he wasn't the most socializing guy ever, and maybe he didn't say 'hello' every time, but he realized that he was just afraid. Afraid that if he did say hello to someone, and not get any reply...then he'd probably start crying over being ignored. He wasn't a whiny child.

No, he wasn't a whiny child. He repeated that to himself mentally, as a fit of solitude finally took the best on him. With school and classes he had forgotten, but how did he send the mail around?

"You off to some mischief, huh? Should set you up by the ankles should I!"

Exiting his thoughts, he stopped, coming face to face with the caretaker of Hogwarts. Wait. Was the caretaker something like the postman too?

"Sir?" He asked, seeing how the man was apparently heading off, having just mumbled that to 'shock' him, maybe.

"What is it?" The man...Filch? Was it that his name? Had a gruff and stern tone, taking on the part actually of the evil guy out for the children's bones to gnaw upon.

"Is there a post office?" Harry asked slowly, as the man blinked once, before coughing while putting his right hand in front of his mouth.

"Post office? Ye don't have an owl? There's the school's ones up in the owl tower to use brat." As he snappishly replied that, Harry's eyes opened wide.

"There...are? And they're...free to use?"

"Course they are!" Filch replied, before his scowl somehow lowered a bit. "You muggle-born?"

"Yes sir." He had replied without thinking. He wasn't actually muggle-born. He had been adopted by muggles, but he was the most far off thing from a 'muggle-born' that there could ever be.

"Thought so." The scowl lowered a bit more, "Well then, you best be on your way then: owling home or not, late is late and will be punished. Get a move on brat!"

As Harry hastily began to run, his ears probably turning slightly red by the embarrassment, he was through the kitchen's painting before he could even realize where he had ended up going.

Of course, he had the most pleasant of solitary dinners ever. Now he had no excuses, did he? He'd have to owl home and say some words about his first week at Hogwarts.

Maybe he'd do that on the next morning...which was Saturday, and the Homework field day apparently. The moment he did indeed return to the Ravenclaw common room, he realized there were papers scattered everywhere, except for two single lines of pavement that walked towards the male and female dormitories respectively.

"Ehm..." He really didn't want to ask anyone, but this was starting to get outright more bizarre than he thought of.

"We need more coffee!" A yell made him yelp in shock and surprise, as he jumped to the side to avoid a scrawny missile of a thing opening the door of the common room and running out.

"Somebody get me the Muggle studies notes of Professor Quirrell!"

"We're losing ground on the Potions statistic for the bi-annual semantic party! All arms to deck1"

What the hell was that about?

"Gryffon's feathers aren't 'cathartically enhanced', who the hell wrote this bullshit, Slughorn!?"

"We're all going to dieeeeeee! Arithmancy will have our souls!"

"Bugger off you idiots! It's just the first week! Get me the Ancient Runes!"

"My straight O's will be a dream of yesterday...that much Divinations told me...I'm screwed!"

"Coffeeeee..."

"Eat chocolate and die happy. Eat chocolate and die happy."

The lingering chaos apparently came from a corner of the room, where sitting at a round table the oldest students were apparently holding a 'crash' study course.

Point being there were no exams...surely there weren't exams so early in the year, were they?

"Now, order around the table!" Basileus intoned, "We will pass our Owls and Newts with full bloody marks or die trying!"

A chorus of 'Hell yeah!' echoed through the table, before a strange 'Ravenclaw is the best' hymn began to be chanted.

"Get over here before they see you!" A voice hissed to him from the stairways, and the next moment, Harry found himself climbing the stairs with Michael.

"Thank god I saw you: every time they see a first years they start droning out about how lucky we are we don't get exams!" Why was he acting all friendly now? He had practically ignored him after the first night of dinner at Hogwarts!

"Yeah, that would be horrible." He muttered...it actually wouldn't be. He wasn't a spoiled child, he knew that of course, but being at the center of attention wouldn't be all that bad...it would be something better than being ignored at least.

"Indeed!" So Michael couldn't understand sarcasm.

Of course.

"Anyway! We're planning on cramming up on Saturday afternoon, would you like to be with us studying in the library like good Ravenclaws?" Harry looked at him for a moment, before smiling lightly and nodding. He had never been one to hold a grudge after all...and they were all kids: of course they weren't intentionally ignoring him.

It wasn't like anything bad was going to happen to him: this was just a school, a school of magic but a school nonetheless. They were all new to this, and so of course they were all hesitant one with the other. There was nothing going on about it: it was all clearly explainable.

So why, when he went to bed, did he have to get poked on the side by a voluminous book entitled, 'Ancient Warfare Trap Runes, guide for absolute destruction', which apparently had made himself known in that instant?

Professor Snape was over-exaggerating with his gifts now. What was he doing, handing Warfare-thought books to him? Did he want him to become a child-soldier of some sorts?

He scowled as he pushed the book inside his trunk. He'd read it later. Just like he'd read later most of the rest of the books. It was

only the first week of school! He wasn't going to 'cram' up on all of it immediately.

Author's notes

The first week is rolling by. Still the Week-end to go!

The Ravenclaws are a bit of a nice 'all-round' house: they have both lunatics and smart-asses, and at the same time they also incorporate lunatic genius. They hold pranksters and bullies too (See Luna treatment).

As always, remember that I intend to keep things 'thoroughly' character-biased.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Conundrum 12

The next morning came abruptly, by the telltale sound of a rooster screaming in the common room the song of his people. A groan escaped Harry's lips as he wearily got up, went to wash and then got dressed into his usual robes. His way down to the common room brought him into the sight of black stains all around the stairs and the walls that looked sort of like dried blood, if not for the pungent smell of coffee coming from them.

In the common room, there was the eye of the beast named chaos. The papers had reached knee-depth length, as the group of student preparing for the OWLs and the NEWTs were sleeping heavily amidst the white landscape tinted of red and blue for the ink of the notes. A set of thermos stood in a corner of the room, near the fire to probably keep them warm. The rooster on the other hand was fighting a losing battle against a murderous looking owl, who was hooting its anger at being woken up by trying to choke up the damn thing.

What was an owl doing there to begin with?

He decided he wasn't going to query, since the rooster's choked sounds made nobody wake up, except him it appeared, he went down to grab a bite at the common room.

It was still early morning, and when he sat down at his table he was half-resigned and half-delighted that he was the only one there.

He was delighted, because he could eat with peace and quiet, but he was also resigned because it meant that once more, he was alone doing something.

Harry looked at the other tables, realizing how the Slytherin's and Hufflepuff's were empty, and the Gryffindor held a couple of red haired boys that looked pretty much the same, both snickering and muttering to one another.

"Everything's alright, young crow?" A motherly like voice spoke softly next to him, making Harry turn his head and stare at the Grey Lady, the ghost of Ravenclaw.

"Oh...Yes madam," he replied quickly, "Rooster woke me up, and I know better than trying to get to sleep again."

"Good." The ghost replied with a little nod, "The hours of the morning are the most industrious, just like those of the night."

Harry toyed a bit with a piece of scrambled egg, before asking.

"I'm sorry to ask...but where's the owl tower?"

"Oh how polite! Well, you take the second staircase to the left and then climb until..."

Twenty minutes later, the Grey Lady had passed from describing the road to actually showing him the place: much easier and quicker. Five minutes later, and he had sent his first official 'owl report' back towards home. Hoping it would reach it eventually.

As Harry was walking back down from the owl's tower, taking the stone steps one at the time, he felt a sudden click coming from his feet. The next moment, a strange brown paste of something terribly smelling hit him full force, covering him from head to toe, before a strange slimy substance made its way through his back making him topple and flail his arms wildly to avoid falling downwards.

He tried to put a step forward to stabilize himself, but slipped and fell hard on his back against the staircase. Staircase that did not however feel like stone, but more like rubber...before he began to quickly slide down across the stairs all the way down to the last floor, where he crashed against the door that would have led him to the hallway.

Just as he crashed against what appeared to have been a red cushion, the pillow exploded releasing colored bright feathers of various forms and sizes.

Harry Dursley did not say a single word.

He was covered in what he hoped was peanut butter jelly, treacle and feathers. His butt was hurting from the fall, but he didn't feel like having something broken...but he felt sticky, he felt gross and...and he was gritting his teeth.

He didn't want to cry. He wasn't a crybaby, really. Still he wanted to know what he had done to elicit such a thing. Had he made somebody angry? Had he done something bad? Maybe he had launched a trap of the castle? Maybe there was something he should have done differently? He hadn't done anything bad...had he?

People tended to ignore him, so maybe the trap hadn't been meant for him...right?

He wobbled back on his feet, hissing in pain for his backside before opening the door and walking out.

There was no-one along the hallways, except a cat that was meowing near a door, a strange skinny thing with orange and yellow fur. Harry looked around, still disoriented from the fall and the scare. He had to turn right to get back to the Ravenclaw tower, but it would mean going through more halls and hallways than not, and if people saw him like that...this was a humiliation. What had he done to get this sort of treatment?

"Stay where you are!" The yell came abruptly from a gruff male voice, and the next instant Harry felt some sort of thick wool blanket being thrown at him, covering him from head to toe.

"Darn Weasleys and their pranks, they caught you huh? Thought they were smart placing a prank on me twice in a row? Knew they'd play it, didn't think they'd get this far though. Come on brat," the voice was still stern and grumbling, but it didn't appear scary, so Harry naturally followed the direction of the man's pull towards his office where he was made to sit down on a wobbly wooden chair.

From the ceiling there were chains hanging around, rusty and in disuse. In a corner there were torture instruments carefully oiled, while cabinet filled with documents to the brim stood nearly everywhere. An old desk was currently holding a teapot steaming with tea, and some biscuits that looked like the type old grannies made when they started to lose their smarts. The fact the caretaker's cat was apparently meowing and purring at his leg didn't make it all better.

"Would you look at that, Mrs. Norris likes you." Filch remarked, as he fished out from one of the cabinet a strange looking yellowish parchment.

"Here, mop yourself with this: got some charm on it that keeps it clean, your Ravenclaw right? I'll head off to call your head of the house then." Filch handed over roughly the parchment, before walking out. "Help yourself to some tea if you want to." The old man added a moment before closing the door behind him.

The cat meowed.

Harry softly began to 'scrub' with the parchment on his face, realizing that indeed the stickiness appeared to be disappearing.

He still didn't feel like new, but it was better than nothing. He wouldn't be presentable until he had a bath at least, but till then he'd survive the feeling of having treacle within his fingers and all the way into his socks.

It was a pretty neat piece of paper...maybe he could ask the man where he had bought one, but till then he just folded it carefully and left it on the desk, next to the tea tray.

There was a second cup now, having apparently appeared out of nowhere. The cat meowed once more, eyeing the biscuits.

Harry smiled slightly, before handing one over to the cat which happily munched it away in a corner.

Then, he began to wait. A couple of minutes that to him seemed like hours passed by, in the time of which he managed to entertain himself by reading the 'list of prohibited items' on Hogwarts' ground that was menacing to fall on him from Filch's desk, until in the end Professor Flitwick walked in, followed by the stern and gruff Filch.

Mrs. Norris meowed once more, having decided to stay on the lap of Harry for the time present, before jumping down and heading for Filch's legs.

"Oh my, Mr. Dursley come here a moment alright?" Filius took his wand out, gently touching him on an arm, and the next second he

didn't feel sticky at all. Even his clothes were now cleaned and...they felt like they had just been ironed and washed.

"Alright," the small man nodded to himself, before querying. "Did you see who did this to you, Mr. Dursley?"

"Has to be the Weasley twins professor, they're always up to no good! If only I could put them in chains by the ankles...that would teach them a lesson alright."

"Now, now Mr. Filch, let's hear Mr. Dursley speak." Hesitantly, Harry related the very few pieces he remembered of the accident. He had been going to the owl tower to write a letter back home, and then it had all happened when he had walked down again.

"All in five minutes?" Filius' gaze turned thoughtful for a moment, "Indeed it was planned, you were just probably caught in the crossfire Mr. Dursley, do not worry about it. You should be fine to go now." Having said that, Harry awkwardly stood up, folding the wool blanket that was still covering him and realizing that indeed, he was completely cleaned from treacle and peanut butter jelly.

It had to be peanut butter jelly: his mind refused to admit it had been dung-paste.

"Thank you Mr. Filch." Harry whispered, handing the wool blanket back to the man who took it with a quick nod, before putting it on a nearby empty chair.

"Thank you too professor Flitwick," he added quickly, visibly flustered from the attention received.

"Not a problem lad. Hope the older Ravens aren't making too much of a fuss." The small man replied with a bit of a smile, "You see, it's a Ravenclaw tradition that all Owls and Newts scores have to be straight O's for the Ravens...so they start studying from the start and can get...a bit exotic in their ways."

"Ah..." Harry gulped down hard. Was he going to be expected to get straight O's too? He could barely make a feather twitch...well, since he was already there...

"I'm sorry professor, but can I ask you a question?"

"Of course lad! No need to be so worried: I'm not going to eat you." Filius chuckled, as Filch meanwhile went back to his tea.

"Is there somewhere I can...practice spells? I have yet to make the feather fly and..."

"Say no more lad!" Filius exclaimed, "There are half a dozen of empty classrooms anyhow, and I'm pretty pleased you had the guts to ask. Lots of people keep on believing that Ravenclaw is all about intelligence and knowing everything; asking questions is far more important than having the answers, my boy, because it means having the desire to learn! Anyway...I think there's a free room on the second floor on the right corridor, saw it once when I wanted to practice spell work in peace and quiet: it's never used and so..."

"Thank you professor." Harry smiled, before saying his goodbyes to both the professor and the caretaker, who appeared visibly perplexed at being a part of the 'bye'.

Still, as he walked out and back towards the common room, he ended up crossing the path of a ghost. This one was properly dressed, like a noble, and held his head slightly wobbling to his right side.

"Oh Mr. Dursley," the ghost addressed him, "I'm very sorry for what happened to you."

"Ah...Well...thank you?" He replied hesitantly.

"Charming." The ghost nodded slightly, "Indeed..." It mumbled for a moment, "Maybe she is right after all..."

"Excuse me?" Harry queried.

"Oh nothing boy, nothing at all." The ghost commented, "I'm Nearly Headless Nick by the way, the Gryffindor's ghost."

"It's...a pleasure, Mr. Nick?"

"Sir Nick, actually."

"Sir Nick." Harry replied with a quick nod. "Was there...something you needed?"

"I doubt you'd be able to help me, but it's nice of you to ask." Nick replied a moment later, "Off you trot boy! It's been a pleasure to talk to you."

Having said that, the ghost flew straight through the pavement, staying only the barely needed time for Harry to reply with a meek 'likewise'.

Taking a deep breath, he re-entered the common room to go grab his stuff. Sure, he had to meet the other kids in the afternoon at the library, but it didn't mean he couldn't get some more training on the wand in the empty classroom.

Second floor, right corridor...and then find an empty classroom.

Of course, the right corridor of the second floor held at least four wooden doors. He could knock on each of them, but he didn't want to intrude in case someone else was already using them...so he had to find the right one.

A portrait of a jester suddenly stopped making jumps and strange ballets once he heard of the boy's plight, and with a bright smile pointed him quickly to the right door.

"Tis the right one kiddo! The furthest away always empty is!"

"Thank you..."

"Reginald! Stop toying with the kid!" A matron of a nearby painting yelled hotly. "Don't listen to him dearie. The right one is the second one."

"Please Guinevre! C'est la troisieme a la droite!"

"He's saying the third to the right," a knight-looking man pointed out nearby.

"Just have him knock then! I'm sure they're all empty to begin with at this time in the morning!" A farmer pointed out, dropping the sowing of his fields.

"Alright..." Harry said, keeping his hands in the air in a sort of 'mock-surrender'. Then, politely, he knocked on the first door, from which he got no reply. Trying to open it he held no results, because it was apparently locked. The second one was empty and open, but it gave on a charming view of a small room with a chimney, a pair of windows, a lot of snoring portraits and a comfortable red armchair in front of the fire pit. On the other side of the chimney, against the wall, stood instead a long table that held a mirror that occupied the entire wall, and that reflected the room perfectly.

Closing the door, he went on to open the third one, and blinked at the sight of a perfect mirrored replica of the room before, down to the portraits.

The last door was instead what he was looking for: empty, filled with dust and cobwebs, and with desks and chairs piled up in a corner. A dirty and greasy window that made air barely filter through and nothing more of notice was to be said.

It was a normal looking empty room. It was perfect.

He took out his wand and one of his quills, dropping it on the floor in front of him and closing the door behind. After that, he began to slowly and methodically go through the gestures to use the 'Wingardium Leviosa'. After the thirtieth attempt, his patience was wearing thin.

After the fortieth, he started to have doubts on being a wizard...he had managed to make the feather twitch, didn't he? So why now was it refusing to even do that to begin with?

He took a deep calming breath: intent, he needed intent and willpower and, well, magic...the wand was dark...a stupid idea popped up in his head.

"There is no-one here who is going to help you now, Mr. Feather." He intoned dramatically, trying to imagine himself as some 'dark overlord' like the bad guys of James Bond films. "Pardon me for talking alone, but I need to get this out of the system..." And then he tried to make the feather 'suffer' through the use of a Wingardium Leviosa.

Of course, it didn't work.

The feather didn't as much as twitch.

"You are getting on my nerves." He hissed dangerously, "You damn, bloody, stuck up feather are..."

And then, with all the frustration that he held into his body for having been subjected to a prank, for having been ignored for the entire week, for having a thrice damned feather refuse to float even when he tried everything he could think of and for having an increased bout of home sickness, Harry Dursley yelled out at the top of his lungs with all the hatred for feathers he could muster.

"Wingardium Leviosa!"

And the feather...detonated.

Bits and pieces of smaller 'feather-bits' flew in the air, as Harry slowly took the time to breath back in the air for the effort. He had never been one to scream...but this...

"Take that, Mr. Feather." He pointed out, dramatically nodding to himself, before collapsing on the floor panting.

"I can do magic." He chuckled.

"The twitch was something but this...this is proof." He whispered to himself.

"I can do magic!" He sing-sung.

"And you can work." Harry eyed his wand clinically, "I'm never, ever, going to yell out loud spells in the middle of the classroom...it's embarrassing for...well...you get the idea...but you work."

And with a last tired sigh, he slumped down on the floor.

Exhilarated and exhausted.

Never mind he hadn't managed to make it float...at least he had made it explode.

In his book, that counted for above a merely denial of gravity's rules.

"...finally."

Author's notes

And we start seeing progress.

And hints, definitively more hints.

Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Conundrum 13

Harry's eyes widened quite comically, as he could swear he had heard someone say something near him. He stood up hastily, looking around with worry and fright: maybe he had used the wrong room, and this one was actually occupied by someone?

Realization hit him that he was, indeed, alone. Standing up, if a bit wobbling, he held his wand firmly with his hand, grabbing from the bag another quill and gently letting it fall on the ground.

With an unnatural calm, he moved through the wand motions at the same time as he intoned, with a completely relaxed posture.

"Wingardium Leviosa."

And the feather...flew in the air, following the movement of the tip of his wand. He felt excited, he felt just like one of those orchestra's directors who used a stick to guide the movement of the people who played the instruments.

Finally, finally the feather was flying.

It wasn't because of a gust of wind, or because of something happening by chance: the feather was flying because he, Harry James Dursley, had made it fly.

"Wingardium Leviosa!" The next thing his wand pointed at was the school bag that began to gently float as the feather fell down. Of course, the next step of Harry's thought process was to point the wand at himself and...the image of the exploding feather made him stop on his tracks.

Slowly putting the point of the wand away from him, he took a deep breath.

"Alright. Now...let's start working on Flipendo."

"You sure you want to do that?" A voice queried, making him outright jump in surprise and turn swiftly around. Coming face to face with a ghost, this one however had his front chest covered in blood, and was apparently dressed like a noble of old. His features were harsh and stern, even among the mistiness that covered much

of his body. The red of the blood however glittered as a sharp contrast to the rest of his pale features.

"I...I'm sorry! I thought the room..."

"Of course the room appeared empty." The Bloody Baron commented drily, "Us ghosts can disappear from sight at will." He added carefully starting to float, his hands behind his back, around Harry while at the same time eying him critically.

"What to do...Hmm...What to do indeed." The Baron remarked slowly, before outright putting his head inside his school bag.

"Hey!" Harry exclaimed shakily, jumping backwards as the ghost merely began to mumble.

"We could do that actually." The Baron commented, before apparently coming up with a decision, because he nodded to himself. "Alright young Raven, please take out the book 'Curses from the Dark Ages to the Dark Enlightenment, and begin reading chapter four, the 'Trudo' spell."

"Ehm...didn't I leave the book..." As soon as Harry said that, the Baron merely scoffed.

"Course you left it in your room: that's why I put it in your bag while you were down for breakfast."

Harry blinked, once.

"Why?" He asked, unsure of what reason a ghost would have to tell him to study for something.

"I was asked to teach you the art of intimidation and strength, the art of ambition and cunningness, the power to have other bow at your sole presence my boy," the Baron's right hand had been brought forward curled in a sort of goblet-holding shape, just like the guy who held the skull of someone and proclaimed 'to be or not to be'...only without the skull.

"Wh...What? But why!?" What the hell!?

"Because, my dear boy, your potential must be harnessed from the very beginning for it to become effective." The Baron added carefully, "And in your condition...no, with your condition...it might prove difficult."

Harry raised an eyebrow at the ghost, perplexed.

"My...condition?"

"Of course I can't speak of it I'm afraid." The Baron added, "But I was never one to stick with the rules you know? I'll do my best to hint at it, but...even if I did, you wouldn't pick them up for a long while...it's the condition."

"Eh?" This ghost was probably halfway mad and halfway psychotic. Maybe a bit of both?

"Stop making garbage sounds boy!" The ghost exclaimed hotly, "I will have only 'Yes, lord Slytherin' and 'No, lord Slytherin' from you! Understood!?"

"Al...Alright..." Harry was slightly trembling at the words of the ghost, tightening his grip on his wand as the ghost looked at him with a bit of an angry gleam in its eyes...before grumbling something.

"Oh! Yes, Lord Slytherin!" He exclaimed a moment after, recalling the ghost's words.

"Good." The Baron nodded quickly. "Now, get your book and start reading the 'Trudo' spell."

Harry scrambled to obey, opening his book bag and realizing that all those books on warfare were actually in there...did the ghost put them in while he was away from his school bag?

"Before Monday begins, my boy...you will have learned the true meaning of power: unearthly strength of magic."

The boy's eyes began to read through the pages of the Trudo spell, but after a couple of lines a sinking feeling of dread washed over him. The spell Trudo came from the Latin denomination and meant various things, from 'push' to 'thrust'. It was, as the book explained, a quick spell to launch on a battlefield, a jinx that could become a

curse if the intent behind the casting was strong enough. It was the equivalent of firing a gun for wizards; the lowest Jinx level apparently pushed the target just like a Flipendo, the midlevel worked like a Hex and made flesh wounds, and the Curse level made holes in the target.

It was shorter and harsher to pronounce than 'Flipendo', and the wand movement was a simple thrust of the wand forward. It was quick, gritty and...extremely bloody.

"Of course if your intent to kill is as strong as that of a kitten, you'll barely get the target to feel a punch in the guts, even if you use the spell at a curse level. To help in practice, picture the person you loathe and hate the most in place of the target."

"Did you read it?" The Baron commented after a while, as Harry had been doing the best he could to get more time by re-reading the various paragraphs.

"Yes..." He whimpered, before suddenly adding, "Lord Slytherin."

"Good. Now demonstrate." And with that, he pointed at himself. "Worry not, I cannot die."

"But..." A harsh glare from the ghost made him quickly point his wand forward, towards the ghost.

Harry was biting on his lower lip, his wand held in his hand, as he took a deep breath. The thing was a ghost of all things: he couldn't bleed to death now, could he?

Still...he was eleven years old...he didn't 'hate' people! There was no-one he hated, and he had never suffered from bullies at school, so...

The Weasley Twins had pranked him just that morning.

He closed his eyes, trying to remember if he had even heard of them or seen them, but failing. He only knew they were the pranksters of the school, and that they had tried to prank the caretaker and instead had ended up taking him in the crossfire.

That wasn't enough to...hate, was it? It was just barely enough to make him slightly angry and on the verge of tears. It was more of a humiliation than a real affront.

The Hermione girl had snubbed him on the first day of lesson. That too had been bad, and sad, but not nearly enough to make him that angry at someone...

It wasn't like he could get angry at will, right?

"So young, to not have made any enemies?" The Baron commented after a moment, "I see what she meant then..." It added, "Never mind then."

"Ehh...what is it, Lord Slytherin?" Harry caught himself at the last moment, as the Bloody Baron merely turned to leave.

"You need to have an enemy, dear boy, before we can proceed. Determination makes your spell work, but it's the emotion behind them that gives them true power...and the strongest emotion of them all is Hatred." With those words, the ghost disappeared beneath the surface of the floor.

Harry took a deep shuddering breath, before packing his stuff up and heading out. There was no chance in hell he'd come back to that room to practice. He'd try another.

By the time he realized he had stopped running, he was halfway towards the common room of the Ravenclaw. He finally barged in the common room only to find it empty, except for the Rooster who was apparently eating its way through some paper notes.

The same owl that had tried to murder the beast once was now eying the Rooster really badly, but the other feathered animal apparently wasn't caring much for the death glares.

Harry slumped on the sofa near the fire, taking one more deep breath to calm his nerves. So, the ghost of Slytherin wanted to train him with hatred? What the hell was going on?

No, why him? What was it with this 'potential' crap and everything related to it?

He was average!

He was born to be average and inconspicuous! He had never wanted to excel, or be the first...he just wanted to be in the middle and live ignored by everyone else!

Harry stopped in mid thought. No. It was wrong.

Harry didn't want to be ignored by everyone...he wanted friends: he had been friend with some of his ex-schoolmates, hadn't he? His brain wracked itself around the issue until he realized that more than a friend...he had always been a passing acquaintance at best.

"You alright young Raven?" The calm soothing voice of the painting of the common room came to his ears, making him look up, to where the portrait of the woman stood. She did appear to be worried, but then again, he supposed he was looking mooney at the moment.

"I...I mean...Yeah. Everything's alright...I suppose." He muttered back, only for Helena to make a 'tsk' sound.

"It is of no use to lie to me, young Raven. I know all that happens in Hogwarts. I'm a portrait after all: we chat a lot among ourselves." Harry gulped, before lowering his gaze down on the ground.

"Now, now...no need to keep your gaze down young Raven...come on: let me see your eyes. Yes, like that." She smiled for a bit, "Now tell me what happened that shocked you so much..."

And Harry spoke.

By the time he was finished, the portrait was still wearing a smile, a really thin smile but a smile nevertheless.

"That man is a f...fine...d...decent...b...baron. If only a bit disconnected from tact...he didn't mean to scare you, young Raven...but he will hear from me, of that you can be assured."

"Please there's..."

"Tut-tut." The woman raised her right hand to signal him to stop speaking, "I know what I have to do with him, it is not the first time he acts before he thinks."

"O...Okay?"

"Good. Now, shouldn't you be doing your homework?" The tone became bossy and as Harry gloomily nodded, the portrait smiled one last time. "Don't worry young Raven: I will not let your potential go to waste." But the last sentence had been murmured so softly that even Harry didn't think that was what she had said.

By the time he was done with a good chunk of his homework he exited the common room to head for lunch and then, hopefully, the library. His steps however didn't bring him towards the common hall, but towards the kitchens. When he realized where he had ended up going for lunch, it was already too late: the portrait had swung open and he was already getting seated in one of the small tables.

Few minutes later, he had lunch alone once more.

Harry sighed, as he headed off towards the library, hoping that he wouldn't be snubbed like with the young Gryffindor. As he sat down on a nearby table, taking out his books and starting to crank on the last bits of homework assigned, his eyes looked around every now and then to see the rest of the Ravenclaw arrive.

They did not come.

Hermione did, however, enter the library and sit at another table, without even saying a word to him of hello. It was official then: the girl was snubbing him. Just like that, his will to study took a deep big hit. What had he done now? Was it because of house rivalry? Maybe because he had earned Ravenclaw points?

It was stupid! Why couldn't people just study for the sake of studying and keep things like points out of it?

He decided he would snub the girl just like she was snubbing him. If 'hatred' was really the key to make spells work, then he'd start feeling contempt for the Gryffindor. Maybe also the rest of the Ravenclaws; because by now they hadn't even...No, they were just late for lunch probably.

Four hours later, Harry had finished all his homework, double checking it and making sure everything was right. He slowly stood

up from his spot and packed his stuff, before heading back to the dormitory. He could understand the Gryffindor girl. He could understand a lot of people ignoring him because he was plain average...but the Ravenclaw had invited him to study with them, so why didn't they come?

As he opened the door of the common room, his gaze settled on the group of young first years studying in a corner. It was enough.

Without a single word Harry walked upstairs. He wouldn't cry. Not because he had been singled out. Not because people were ignoring him.

This was what he wanted right? To be average, ignored, to be left in peace and alone.

No. This wasn't what he wanted...so why, just why, was this happening to him?

"...curse...them..."

The voice hissed once more at his ear, and Harry looked around, only to find nothing. Had he looked at the tip of his wand, or back, he'd have seen the small trail of smoke that he was leaving behind swirl around without wind.

A few minutes of paranoia later, his face was pressed against his pillow. He'd skip dinner...considering no-one would care at all it wasn't like it would matter, would it?

When he blearily opened his eyes again, it was late at night, and people were already sleeping. He vaguely recognized a small blurred form on his bed-desk that vaguely resembled a book. Groaning ever so slightly as to not wake the others, he tried to get a feel of what it was.

He didn't need a candle light, considering the window wasn't with panels and the light of the moon sufficed for the moment.

He could barely decipher the calligraphy though, so it took him some time to get the gist of the book that in truth was just a bunch of papers tied together with a string.

"Neville Longbottom's Astronomy notes. Please bring back to Hufflepuff table when found."

That was the gist of what was written on the upper line of the paper, albeit Harry held the mother of all headaches for having tried to decipher it at night, with the moon light, and still being dizzy from the sleep.

He sighed, before leaving the notes on the bed-desk and turning around to get back to sleep. The next day was a Sunday.

Maybe he'd go around the castle's grounds? Maybe he'd explore a bit?

As he fell back into the comfort of sleep, not really caring he was still wearing his robes on, his mind began to churn out dreams of him walking around the grounds of Hogwarts and fighting off mythological monsters of sorts.

The next second, his head was ducking the pincers of a giant war scorpion, his armor glistening in the sun and filled with runes, as his wand raised itself and yelled out a spell he knew not the name of, tearing through the enemy lines like they were made of paper dolls, and not of living flesh beings.

The next moment, a man charged at him with a sword, a sword that shone brightly and that tore through his shield and armor, making him bleed.

"...it ends...here..."

"Never!"

Harry's wand touched the ground, as spikes of earth erupted, tearing through the enemy's guts.

"You...here..." He mumbled, tossing around in his bed before opening his eyes.

There was no battlefield. He had just slept a bit in his bed.

Of course.

There was just no way he'd ever be able to do things like that now, could he?

Author's notes

Hints, more hints, even more hints.

For those who asked: Lily is briefly seen in the infirmary, as the 'blurred' figure with red hair who says just a line.

ON another note: Happy Christmas holidays!

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 14

Sometimes, life gives you sour grapes and lemons. Other times, life gives you chocolate. When it starts handing over to you a sour grapes and lemons smoothie with chocolate mixed inside, then you realize that life actually hates your guts, hates you, and wants you to die of a most painful and devastating death.

The point wasn't however needed to debate the self-moping that Harry was currently experiencing. It served as a far more intrinsic requirement to reach the final conclusion of what brought Harry Dursley, on Sunday morning, to head off towards the grounds of Hogwarts and have a look around.

Harry Dursley didn't want to look at his fellow Ravenclaws or at any other student really; he just wanted some peace and quiet. So of course he ended up getting literally assaulted by a giant dog with sharp razor teeth which had the small decency of not aiming straight for his jugular.

No, of course life isn't that easy.

"Fang! Come back here boy! Come on! Stop harassin' the first year!" The bellowing voice of the giant caretaker of Hogwarts made itself known a second later. A second in which the dog actually managed to get Harry's face drenched in saliva.

"You alright?" The giant asked, roughly pulling him up from the ground and patting him gruffly to remove the dirt from his robes.

"Y-Yes." Harry muttered, "W...Is he...always like that?"

"Who? Fang? He's a cub at heart that dog! Still hasn't realized his body's a bit big." The man coughed a moment, "Well I'm Hagrid, groundkeeper of Hogwarts!" The giant pushed his right hand in a fist to tap his own chest, before chuckling, "My rock cakes are the best there are in the school!"

Harry looked at him for a moment, before slowly nodding.

"I...I see. Is there...is there a sink somewhere near here? Or a fountain!" He quickly added. There wouldn't be a sink near the grounds now, but a fountain was all the more probable.

"Nah! No need! Follow me: would you like some tea?"

As Hagrid started to walk, forcing Harry to literally run in order to keep up with the giant, the young boy was already thinking about how he was being forcefully carried by the groundkeeper, who still appeared a bit...big, to its house.

He had been told by his parents about the 'strange guys' who tended to roam around children's schools...but this one appeared a bit too big and...well, 'simple' was the best term. It wasn't like he distrusted Hogwarts per se, but the question still remained...

No. It was some sort of Forrest Gump of the magical world. Hagrid was apparently just that: simple. Tea was just tea, and as he found out, the 'rock cakes' were probably the best of Hogwarts because he was the only one who could make them.

"Ehm...Hagrid?" Harry hesitated, but by then he had actually tried biting into one, and had nearly chipped off a tooth of his, "Could...could you just, you know...tell me what's in the rock cakes?"

"Ah you see: it's a secret recipe that one! Can't really give it up now, can I?" Hagrid replied with a broad smile of his.

"Oh, no...it was...well, they're a bit...hard to chew on, you know?" Harry should have kept his mouth close, especially when Hagrid took one and chewed on it like it was marshmallow, and not the byproduct of cakes merging with rocks.

"Feels just fine."

"Yeah well...I suppose they'd be good...but I can't manage to chip them even with my teeth." Better to be blunt with it. He was sure the man would be offended if he said nothing and left the cake on the plate.

The plate in the middle of the hut, the wooden hut that sat inside a pumpkin orchard and that apparently was far more spacious within than it looked like from outside.

"Oh! Damn, well..." The fact that the half giant was actually making a sad face was somehow making him feel hideous. In the end Hagrid looked just far more like a giant kid than an adult...even though it could be a cover. Still, when Hagrid rumbled around and then turned, he was holding a half of a chocolate cake.

"Got this trying to bake a cake for a friend's birthday: got only half of it done though..." The man was apologetic, as Harry's face was probably looking at him sadly.

"It's alright, really! The tea is pretty good...maybe you should make the cakes softer? Did you put in water or milk?"

"Ah well you see..."

Two hours later, the discussion on rock cakes had Hagrid finally take out the entire receipt, had it substitute things like 'rock paste' with 'flour' and 'dirt' with 'milk' and by the time they were done...it was a completely different recipe.

"Well kid! When I make the firs' one I'll send it at..."

"Harry. Dursley. Ravenclaw." He squeaked out one word after the other, taking a deep breath.

"Oh you one of the Ravens aren't ya? You seem far down to ground for me! Good to know." A few minutes of awkward silence passed by, before Harry decided to stand up and exclaim.

"Well...I've got to go and do some homework...Thanks for the tea, and the cake and the hospitality." As he tried to be polite, all he got back was a strong 'pat' on the shoulder that made him rock on his own feet.

"You're a good kid Harry!" And with that, Harry was on his way out.

Well, the guy was a good guy...and the chocolate cake was delicious, but chocolate is always good no matter what form it takes, so maybe he was a bit biased. His thoughts kept themselves on chocolate for a bit, at least until he passed two familiar students going in another direction, of course not having seen him.

"I tell you that my scar hurt again." Lillian muttered towards Ron, who merely snorted back at the girl.

"So it's Snape you think?" Harry listened in to them only to that point, stopping midway and looking at their backs like he had seen two headed persons.

Had he had a bit of a backbone, he would have probably tried to spy upon them, or get to understand what they were saying...as it was, he had better things to do: like get the Flipendo spell right or copy Neville's notes...he'd do that.

He'd copy Neville's notes and then bring them back to the boy at lunch or dinner. That would be enough human contact for the day, especially if he took the time in between to learn the Flipendo. He'd gotten down the basic to defy gravity...pushing someone back wouldn't take much more, would it?

Harry entered the common room, finding as usual a corner of it completely submerged by people making notes and muttering among themselves, while the small table near the fire pit was currently empty, even the portrait was missing Helena within it...It was a bit strange actually, to stare at nothing but a background when you just knew the painting's portrait was strolling around at leisure.

Neville's calligraphy was just what he had expected: completely horrendous. Next time, he'd avoid missing the lessons...but he was partnered with Neville, of all people for potions. He'd have to get another Bezoar; definitively. At lunch, he was done copying the notes. It was actually refreshing to move down with the rest of the Ravensclaws for lunch, and heading towards the common hall. The fact that many gave him the cold shoulder, without him ever having done anything however...it was strange.

It felt like being invisible in their midst, and it felt just so...strange.

As he sat down, his eyes moved cautiously towards the teacher's table, trying to get a view of professor Snape and the rest of the teachers.

Professor Potter had red hair, just like he had been told his father would have, but his eyes were a great deal darker. He was speaking

together with another man with jet black hair, apparently about Quidditch, considering he could hear their bellowing laughs about the matter from his spot at the table. The Potion's master face was instead contorted into a deep frown, and he did stand at the far end of the table, right next to Madam Pomfrey it appeared. Next to Madam Pomfrey there was however an empty seat, one that then would have been next to Madam Sprout.

There was someone of the staff missing, he supposed.

His eyes then settled towards Neville, who was at the Hufflepuff table. He could do it, right? He just had to stand up, move while hundreds of eyes feasted upon his walking body and deliver the notes back.

Oh who the hell was he kidding? He'd wait until Neville stood up and then would hurry after him. He had no intention of becoming the spectacle of the masses. No intention at all.

Quietly, once he had eaten lunch, he stood up and moved out in the hallway, intercepting Neville as he was apparently walking back alone towards the Hufflepuff's common room.

"Neville!" He yelled at the boy, running to reach him.

"Huh? Oh...Harry?" Why was the boy hesitating on him? Of course he hadn't already forgotten his name, had he?

"Here!" He handed over the notes of the boy, and as the Hufflepuff's eyes lit up, he knew he was going to remember...

"Thanks for having found them! I just don't know where I had lost them you see? Though Peeves had gotten his hands on them and..." And just like that, Harry remained silent and quiet, while Neville smiled and then dashed away.

"No..." Harry whispered, "You...You said..."

He looked around a bit lost, looking at the portraits who were watching the scene from their spots with...with a look of sadness on them? Why were they sad about it? There shouldn't have been sadness, right? They had just seem him deliver back the notes that the boy had lost...yet they were sad.

It was just as if...as if they knew why.

"Why?" He asked, looking at the portraits. "Why?" He yelled at them, only for them to flinch and disappear from their respective paintings.

Clenching his fists, Harry took a deep breath.

He wouldn't cry. Not for this blatant, horrendous, horrible act of pranking him and bullying him through this. No. He would do just as his father always told him to do when someone tried anything: be the top dog. Make them cower. Don't show any weakness.

He'd show them.

He'd bloody, frigging, damn well show them.

The suit of armor that had stood quietly in the corner self-dismembered itself, while all around him the empty portraits flew in the air and smashed themselves on the ground just as if someone had been throwing them all around.

And Harry stood there, quietly taking deep calming breaths. This was just, just not possible.

There was no way somebody would just forget about him from one day to another. He had done nothing wrong, nothing!

"Peeves now!? Damn boy, you've got the shittiest of lucks..." The voice made him blink, as he turned around quickly. The caretaker, Filch, was apparently walking towards him swiftly. Was he going to get punished for...what the hell had happened around him?

"Don't you worry, Peeves takes it out on everyone." Filch began, "Now, try and get out of there without hurting yourself, alright? Those armor sides cut like bitc...ehm, like he...anyway, they cut and they hurt!"

Harry slowly made his way out of the apparently battlefield of random metal and wooden splinters. By the time he was next to the caretaker, the man was already grumbling about Peeves.

The meowing sound of Mrs. Norris echoed down at his feet, and as the cat practically jumped into his arms, Harry found himself stroking the cat. Just as if he was one of those evil antagonist of a James Bond film.

"I'll get Peeves for this, oh if I will. Harassing a student! Well, at this point it's already the second time we meet brat. Are you a magnet for trouble?" The man's not so subtle question got him back a rapid shaking of Harry's head.

"Anyway, I'm sure you've got better things to do than stay here like a lamppost; so..."

"Do you need a hand?" Harry asked, a few seconds later, earning a surprised look from the caretaker.

"You sure you want to help? There's not much you can do with the wand right now, right?"

"I...I've got nothing else to do." He replied quickly, "And...And it's my fault it got like this, right?"

"Well...who am I to refuse good help?"

As he left Mrs. Norris on the ground, he began to help out Filch in putting back the armor to place, followed by what little portraits had remained in one piece. A few seconds later, the caretaker mumbled, looking at the amassed pile of splinters that still stood down there.

"I'll have to get someone to repair them I suppose. Can you go up to the seventh floor? Look for the painting of dancing trolls on the left corridor and walk in front of it for three times. A door should open with the cleaning stuff inside. I need a bag and a shovel I suppose." How were a bag and a shovel, of all things, found in a room for cleaning stuff? Did he have to hide a corpse?

If the feeling of Harry's guts had been of any indication, then yes, for Harry it was just like he was hiding a corpse. It hadn't been Peeves fault, whoever this Peeve was of course; it had been him. He had no idea how he had managed that, but still it remained clear he had been the one to do it.

The seventh floor, of all things, was quite a bit far above...but he had said he had nothing better to do, and it was true; the Flipendo spell could wait.

There wasn't a painting of trolls dancing but a tapestry, one that apparently was sharing the power to move with the portraits. In the case of the tapestry however, it was more of a curse than an actual magical thing: the troll's dance was horrendous to see, or even to comprehend.

He began to walk in front of it, three times was what he had been told, and so, as he walked in front of the tapestry, his thoughts drifted. He had had time enough while walking up the stairs to forget about what he had to grab from the room, only that it was needed to clean up the mess down below, and as he was a bit short on breath, his thoughts were elsewhere.

They did verge primarily on the need for something cool to drink.

At the third time of walking in front of the tapestry, nothing happened. He turned around to look near the tapestry, but was surprised when the door actually appeared behind his back. Harry slowly moved closer to the door, opening it carefully as he made his way inside.

Lemonade. Coke. Water. Sprite. Bottles upon bottles of drinks all piled upon metallic shelves. It looked like the interior of a supermarket, one that was apparently closed or deserted, because no-one was currently shopping through the shelves.

He took a step backwards, closing the door and looking in shock as it disappeared.

"...This isn't happening." He muttered, before looking back at the tapestry. "Alright...three times." He began to walk once more in front of the dancing trolls, who were now openly laughing and pointing at him of course.

"I...I'm supposed to find the cleaning supplies, really." He muttered to himself, before seeing the door appear one more time. This time, indeed, there were the cleaning supplies within it.

"Oh...Well..." He gulped down for a second, before closing the door. "Can't be what I'm thinking it is, right?"

He began to pace fast, thrice, in front of the room.

The moment he was done, the door appeared once more, and this time, Harry opened it with trepidation.

Beyond the door stood Private Drive, number 4: more precisely, he was within his house, the door having apparently taken the place of the cupboard...everything was silent around the house, but he supposed his father had taken his mother to a film, or to a lunch with friends, or maybe even to a dinner at a restaurant...the entire thing was...

It was wicked.

It was...

"Magic." He muttered, shaking his head as he closed the door one more time.

"This is a frigging door...a door to everywhere." Of course, Harry remembered only when he was halfway through the stairs down that he had been sent up to look for a shovel and a bag, and so retraced his steps. This time, however, he was as light as a feather...if he needed a way out...he had one.

He'd surprise his parents on Monday morning! His mother would be so shocked at seeing him, and maybe...no. Maybe he'd hold it off until Saturday morning, but what if his parents couldn't visit Hogwarts? Maybe there were visiting hours to respect?

That the case, maybe it was better not to have them come, was it?

Right. He'd just pop up on an afternoon, and would wait for them...yeah, he'd do that.

Even if Neville and the other kids at school ignored him or pranked him, it wouldn't matter: he had his family, and that would never change. Ever.

Author's notes and Q&A!

Two chapters a day, and question and answer because this is the Christmas' Power!

That said, the Room of Requirement is just that, a room who cannot create food by itself and that did not change. However, when it needed food it created a door towards Hogsmeade, meaning that it can also act as a 'door' at the 'Stargate' (only referring to places on Earth of course).

To Vik: it's the bouts of accidental magics actually. As it was with Harry in Canon making his aunt a 'floating blueberry', so it's the same around here.

To Sevae: the description given on the HP wiki of Harry's stick would be something of the sort:

This jet-black wand wood has an impressive appearance and reputation, being highly suited to all manner of combative magic, and to Transfiguration. Ebony is happiest in the hand of those with the courage to be themselves. Frequently non-conformist, highly individual or comfortable with the status of outsider, ebony wand owners have been found both among the ranks of the Order of the Phoenix and among the Death Eaters.

In the experience of Garrick Ollivander, the ebony wand's perfect match is one who will hold fast to his or her beliefs, no matter what the external pressure, and will not be swayed lightly from their purpose.

This made the wand's core material of Ebony perfectly suited for what plans I had for Harry's future.

Gaboon Ebony is an even 'harsher' type of wood, thus 'extremizing' what is already said of ebony (in my opinion)

For the 'Core' of Dementor Shroud and Thestral Hair, well, Thestral hair is 'Not Easily Seen' (HINT!) while the Dementor Shroud isn't mentioned and I added it to boot and will be mentioned further on.

I tend to be extremely nitpicky with details that is thus the reason I usually research things before starting on them.

To Sakura Lisel: It might just appear like that. Might. Appear.

Answered what I could without giving away much. The time skip to Halloween will probably arrive soon...one week has been done after all, but as they say 'who will live will see'.

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 15

The sickening feeling of dread pooled into his stomach slowly, as he made his way to class on Monday, hoping against all odds to be wrong. It was the potion's hour, and just as he got to his cauldron, hoping to whatever gods existed that the professor hadn't forgotten about him too, he realized that nobody was actually looking at him.

It was...strange, now that he could finally look at the students. They all seemed in their best behaviors, but their eyes...they didn't look at him, no. They just passed over him like he wasn't even there. Now that was something that was strange. The caretaker had no problems looking at him, and neither did Professor Snape, or Hagrid, or the ghosts or the portraits...but then again, what did they all have in common?

Of course they were all older, and so they wouldn't be playing this sort of stupid prank on him. He was now actually rethinking the Bloody Baron's idea: it held merit and...

Condition. His condition.

The Bloody Baron had told him of a condition, hadn't he? So...he knew! He knew and...and he couldn't tell. He had ignored it at first but now...now he needed to know. He wasn't going to let something like that pass by him any longer. Maybe he'd look for him the next day, or the next weekend, or...No!

NO!

No. He'd look for him after the lessons, even if he had to search through the entire castle, from the highest tower to the lowest level. He'd look and he'd find the damn ghost and get the story out of him. Till then, apparently, he was stuck preparing a mild boil salve together with Neville who, just like the first time, didn't tell him about his inability to follow instructions.

"Leave this to me, Neville." Harry muttered, "You can't read." The look the boy sent his way was a mixture of embarrassment and a slight glare, but it didn't matter any longer: he'd forget about him by the next hour probably, wouldn't he?

His cousin too would probably end up doing the very same thing. Lillian had spoken to him through letters throughout the month before school however, and she had looked out for him during class, when it had become easier...so maybe she was immune from his 'condition'? He should have asked her, eventually.

Maybe also ask if he could meet with her father and speak about his own. Maybe he...

His hands grabbed the slightly poisonous tree sap needed for the burning salve and pinched a healthy dose of it within the bubbling cauldron, and just as the potion's color was turning a simmering blue, his left hand jerked to grab a...a pinch of salt?

No. If he placed the salt within the cauldron it would...just what the hell was he thinking!?

His hand widened before the salt could enter the cauldron, falling on the desk as Harry outright fought the stupid idea of throwing something else inside the potion.

His brain didn't want to, but his body felt the need to. It was...He'd have to see Madam Pomfrey then that afternoon, or as soon as possible. He wouldn't call for Professor Snape because he didn't want to make a fuss in the middle of the class but...

The hand lowered itself a second later, returning to his control.

"What?" He whispered. Neville had watched the thing with mild curiosity probably, but was refraining from commenting.

If he had really added salt to the mixture, it would have probably exploded. He knew that salt was one of those basic components in potions that shouldn't be used without care...yet he hadn't been thinking twice about throwing a handful of it within the cauldron.

Something was clearly wrong with him.

Maybe he could go and speak with the defense against the dark arts teacher...if this was a curse of sorts on...his hand shot forward once more, grabbing a full handful of salt this time and throwing it into the cauldron before he could try and control it.

The cauldron, of course, began to bubble quickly.

It was then that, with a strange sudden jerk of the hand, a bezoar fell directly inside their cauldron making the potion outright disappear into a pitch black dark mist. Apparently that was the normal color that potions took when a bezoar was inserted in them...and it probably nullified all types of potions being boiled too; it also left the cauldron completely clean.

Neville had apparently reacted without thinking, his eyes looking perplexed at the scene before his face scrunched up in some sort of recollection. It lasted but a second, and then it was gone.

"We should start the potion again..." Neville muttered, "I thought it was here though...did I mix it wrongly? Well, better than have it explode right?"

"Yeah." Harry replied uneasily, looking at his hand as the feeling of dread merely intensified. The sudden sizzling noise that came to his ears made him turn in curiosity, only for a slight detonation to send the steaming contents of a cauldron nearby on him.

Harry screamed five seconds before the potion made contact, pushing his arms upwards in the instinct common to all humans to protect their body and face from harm's way. The scorching feeling was the last thing he felt.

Severus Snape

Severus Snape, potion master of Hogwarts, was looking through the various cauldrons with a mixture of disdain and well placed anger at the dunderheads' works. It was a salve they had to make, not some sort of lethal explosive device. Of course the difficulty was a bit higher, but it was the second week: they were supposed to learn far more. He was also supposed to grade the potions of the week before too. A sizzling sound alerted him in time to take out his wand, but before he could effectively throw the charm to vaporize the contents of a cauldron, it spewed its foul liquids outwardly.

When he redirected his wand to try and make it disappear in mid-air, however, it was far too late. The boy screamed and then fell on the ground completely covered in the potion that was apparently burning him badly.

"All of you! Stop working and empty your cauldrons now!" He ordered, before stomping towards the fallen boy's form and carrying it with him, making him float, towards the infirmary.

He knew who the boy was, and it was because he knew who he was that he had no choice but make sure he would be immediately tended to.

Snape left the boy's whimpering form on one of the infirmary's stools, before moving to call Madam Pomfrey. Of course the assistant of the nurse wasn't present at the time, and he knew why of course...

It was in moments like those that he started to think if they had really done the right thing that night, but was there any turning back?

Harry Dursley

His entire face was burning in pain, just like his arms. Whatever the substance had been, it had torn right through his robes and gloves and hit him pretty badly. Even after a few minutes, even when he had felt himself being lifted and brought possibly to the infirmary, he had felt the burning sensation badly. It had even intensified for a brief moment, forcing him to start whimpering, before it had slowly begun to cool down.

Harry was starting to think there was some sort of plot against him: luck seemed to hate him, to avoid him, to refrain from even giving him a minute of the day. He had mad ghosts, people ignoring him and accidents happening. He had never been late prior to Hogwarts, and now instead he was.

He had never been too early; he had never had his feet drag him to the kitchens, or through strange hallways. He had never been outright ignored for having done nothing, or been snubbed because of that. Something strange was going on. Something that was...the burning sensation increased to the point that he felt the need to let out a small moaning sound of pain. It was like the heat was pulsing over his body.

This...this wasn't supposed to be normal. Maybe a bezoar would work? He'd have to look into his pocket though: could he? Pilfering supplies from around him hadn't been difficult, but it didn't change

the fact that if these were results even when he was fully clothed, then just what were they trying to teach? How to prepare explosives?

The burning cooled down, and for once he hissed out in relief: maybe he'd manage to get to the afternoon lesson on...

The burning came back. Hitting him together with a crippling headache right at the base of his neck, Harry gritted his teeth harshly, his hands tightening into fists to the point where his knuckles were probably turning completely white.

No. Maybe he wouldn't...and the pain left.

His eyes shot open in a moment, as he inhaled air sharply: the pain left whenever he...

He blanked out the next moment.

Somewhere

"Oblivate? On him? Already?"

"What other choice do we have?"

"This won't..."

"I know what I'm doing, Severus."

"Sometimes, I doubt it."

"The prophecy..."

"The prophecy can rot to..."

"Not even he knows, Severus...would you really tell him?"

"Fine...but what if..."

"A line has to be drawn: it is getting too violent."

"Were those any trouble?"

"Course not, Severus. Who do you take me for that I can't dispose of them of all things?"

"With your...never mind."

"Hurry Severus. Hurry."

Harry Dursley

Harry woke up in his bed up in the Ravenclaws dormitory. He blinked, carefully looking at the clock that signaled the sixteenth hour of the day, right in the middle of the afternoon. He had apparently collapsed after having breathed in the poisonous fumes of yet another botched potion from Longbottom. His only relief was that indeed, he wasn't feeling sick any longer. He stood up quietly, deciding to walk downstairs in the common room to see if anyone had the defense against the dark arts notes, that he couldn't attend the lesson of.

Actually, he wasn't very much keen on following those lessons, not when he thought the professor was such a bore. The Slytherin ghost was kind of better...after all the ghost had at least far more years of experience than some unknown professor of whom he only knew the nickname 'Prongs'.

Why was he even going to bother speaking to him?

Or to his cousin that, for what little it mattered, was an apparently arrogant brat who thought better than to associate with her muggle-raised cousin?

Of course the girl hadn't known who he was really the son of, because he...

Who were his parents to begin with? His real ones?

He frowned for a moment, his face probably making some sort of strange motion, trying to recollect what his parents' surname had been. His real ones of course...Dursley was out, Evans was his mother's maiden one and...nothing.

His adoptive parents had never told him, had they?

No, they had never said anything about them...Freaks both of them, died in a...in a drunk driving stunt?

It was wrong, completely and utterly wrong, but...the memory was there, wasn't it?

He winced for a moment, before finally recollecting his thoughts: he knew he came from some pureblooded family, but he didn't recall which one. His cousin was Lillian Potter, but she had practically forced him in isolation and made sure he would never speak with her again. He was alone at Hogwarts, with no-one to turn to but the ghosts and the portraits...and maybe the groundkeeper and the caretaker.

The only professor who barely gave him the time of the day was Professor Binns, who was a ghost, and Professor Snape. Flying was a subject he despised and that he would get the exoneration for, since it wasn't even mandatory from the second year onwards and it freed his schedule.

He settled his glasses from the tip of his nose back to their normal resting spot, before looking at the picture of Helena, who was apparently empty that day too. He'd need to make up for the lost time apparently.

Life in Hogwarts sucked, hard, but he wasn't going to let it get to him.

He was Harry Dursley; he'd challenge the system and he'd change it.

...but the question that still remained, deeply engrained in the back of his head, was one and only one.

It kept battling against the rest of his thoughts, lurking around every corner of sentence and every moment of thoughtlessness, it popped up from random gazes at objects and while he was walking, and it was but a single word.

Why?

That was something he should have queried about, but...but he found himself not caring.

He was in a school filled with magic. He should learn about it, and the next day he was meant to have charms and history, two subjects he didn't dislike at all...maybe he should have tried to cram some more.

He'd do that, definitively...after heading off to the library to study some more before dinner, which he'd take in the kitchens.

If his contact with the rest of the students was kept to the minimum, then the Weasley twins wouldn't prank him, would they? And the 'ignore Harry' game would be nothing more than a shared idea that would suit him just fine: he'd ignore them all too.

It was just like he wanted it: to keep being ignored and to remain inconspicuous. Nothing would top going through all six years of Hogwarts without being forced even a single moment to befriend someone else.

The library was no longer as deserted as he thought it would be: there were people moving around, some sitting down and other murmuring to one another. In a corner near the fire Draco was doing his homework together with another Slytherin, a female, and apparently he was in quite a hurry judging by the angle his quill was bending. Maybe it was meant for the next day?

The Charm professor had only asked for success in the Wingardium Leviosa charm, while professor Binns had wanted an essay of at least three feet on the goblin battles he had spoken of...which he had done with his eyes closed and waltzing, last he recalled.

Slowly, he reached to sit at a nearby table, when the voice of Draco piped in.

"Over here Harry!" So Draco wasn't a part of the 'let's ignore Harry Dursley game', at least it was something.

"Draco! Didn't see you..." He replied, leaving his school bag near him as he sat down in front of the Slytherin boy.

"Harry, this is Tracey. Tracey, this is Harry." The blond boy hastily said, as he quickly flipped another page, to get ahead of his notes probably. Giving a look at the book, it turned out that Harry had been indeed right: Draco was doing the assignment for Binns.

"So that's who you kept talking about...pleasure to meet you." The girl had dark hazel hair and brown eyes, and didn't appear to possess any remarkably peculiar characteristic of sorts, if not for the fact that her hair was bowl cut and with a bang of hair covering her right eye just barely, there was nothing else to notice. Not at a quick glance, that was all that Harry gave the girl.

"Likewise." He replied nervously, before starting to look through his bag for a book to read...he would have had charms the next day, wouldn't he? The next spell on the list would be...Lumos?

Well...someone had to start somewhere, and destroying buildings was still way out of his league.

He'd start small. Eventually...eventually he'd get it all down.

And then he'd show them, those who thought he was worthless and thought he could be pranked and be left alone in a corner to cry.

He'd show them all.

Why?

"Ehi Draco..." Harry began to ask softly, "Do you know if there's some sort of prank going around on me?" He queried quietly.

The blond boy actually tensed for a moment, before asking.

"What happened?"

"Well...it's just that I get this feeling people tend to ignore me, or snub me...the worst kind is when they actually invite me to a study group somewhere and then never show up or have it elsewhere without warning me..." As he spoke, he knew he was relating one-time happening things like they were common, but the end justified the means, didn't it?

If only he knew what end he was actually thinking of, then everything would be far better.

"Oh..." Draco muttered, "Well..." He hesitated for a second. "You see..."

"What is it?" Harry asked, worried. "What did I do to get that treatment out of everyone at school?"

The blond haired boy took a deep breath, before looking at Harry with determination.

"I'm...I'm Draco Malfoy, alright?"

"And what does...wait-a-minute." His hand grabbed the book of Abraxas Malfoy, "Your...ancestor wrote this?"

"Grandfather actually." Draco replied quickly, "And...no, that's not actually the reason."

"So the reason is..." Harry murmured, waiting for the boy to finish his reasoning.

"My father...he was accused of being a Death Eater, pleaded innocent because he had been under the Imperius curse all the time, and then he got...well, he was proven innocent." Harry raised an eyebrow.

"Imperius...curse?"

"Oh right, you're muggle raised; the Imperius curse makes one obey the commands of another. It's one of the Unforgivable curses, those that cannot be used without risking ending up in Azkaban."

Harry decided he'd query about what Azkaban was later on, for now he wanted to get to the end of it.

"Why would they bully me because of...well, your father?"

"Because my father's a governor of the board of the school and..." The boy took a deep breath, "Look, every year, my family donates money to St. Mungo's hospital. The year the process went on, they got enough money to open up a new wing in their hospital, so the press thought my father had bribed his way out of it. Coupled with what my grandfather wrote..."

"Wait. Your father said he was under orders he couldn't refuse from Vol...from You-Know-Who, right?" Harry asked just to be sure, and

as Draco nodded, there was something that made the Ravenclaw's brain click.

"Just like the Nazi who claimed at Norimberga that Hitler gave the orders. Same thing...so: they decided to snob me because they couldn't snob you?" He asked...he just wanted to be clear on what was going on.

"That and because it's a Slytherin you're friends with," Tracey suddenly added her two cents, "You're not completely wrong on Draco's father..." Earning herself a 'hey' from Draco, who still let the girl finish, "But you must understand that during You-Know-Who reigns, a lot of people followed the man for other principles than just 'burn the muggle'."

"Like?"

"Well, You-Know-Who offered the Werewolves and the Giants real places to live in and not 'natural reserves' like there were. He also made it a point not to attack innocent wizards who simply went their way, and probably wouldn't have attacked the muggles at all if he hadn't been pressed for making a solid political base after..."

"I lost you at 'attacked the muggles'." Harry deadpanned. "I...Listen." He began slowly. "I just wanted to have fun at school, and learn magic." He muttered shaking his head, "Since it appears I won't have the first, I'll at least get the second...so...I don't care if you believe in the Magical Nazi party, or you're a founder of the 'Let the Goblins have it all'...live and let live is my philosophy of life...alright?"

"So...we're not...friends?" Draco asked; his voice actually laced with worry at that point...what was he afraid of?

"I...well...no, we can be friends of course!" Harry exclaimed hotly. "It's just that sometimes, I'd like to be told things like these before I have to feel them on my skin...I might have been more prepared, alright?" Then, he sulkily added, his gaze moving sideways, "And if this is all it takes for them to snob me...then they're not worth it."

Draco merely nodded, a small smile spreading on his face before returning to his homework, as Harry instead began reading through the Lumos spell.

Tracey looked at the two boys and then rolled her eyes. Still...now she was a bit curious concerning this Harry. She didn't even recall seeing him during classes, especially not the last one. It wasn't of her to pry though, and thus she said nothing more.

Author's notes

I have laid thickly the last hints. From here on out there should be the small timeskip towards Halloween's party, and forward (To doom and beyond)

Just one small explanation in order to make it even more 'clear': What Draco says is what he thinks is happening. It can be true or it cannot be true, only time will tell. At present, with the 'data' given, Draco came up with that.

You might notice a far 'meeker' Draco, but actually I'm of the thought wave that 'nobody is inherently evil or good, it's all just a matter of circumstances'.

As for who Severus is talking to...good luck finding out and a digital cookie if you get it right!

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 16

Halloween came by quietly. One day, the castle of Hogwarts suddenly found itself filled with carved pumpkins and lights, and the student's excited buzzes reached every corner of the place. Not that it mattered much to Harry, who was currently face deep on the advanced potion book that professor Snape had given him. Even as a future drunkard, his mother's students' years had to have been at least productive. There were spells and curses among the book, all of which appeared to be scribbled with the sole intention of fighting off an enemy to kill it, rather than to simply stun it.

He hadn't even been reading a single page of the book in regards to making potion...but it wasn't like it mattered. Harry now had the theory behind the spells firmly down, and all that remained to him was practice. There was one spell he had finally managed to get down. That one would have probably made the Bloody Baron proud, if only the ghost would finally deem him worthy enough to resume their 'lessons'...even though they had barely done one.

He hadn't thought he actually would possess enough viciousness to use the Trudo spell...he had been wrong. Weeks of no-one speaking to him, ignoring him like he was just the middle of a joke who still needed the punch line to come; it didn't make him the happiest person around Hogwarts.

The few friends he had were either older than him, and thus more than friends they would have accounted as acquaintances, or of a different house. Whatever the prank was, it did not affect the professors who still graded his homework, the caretaker and the groundkeeper, Draco and the few friends at present that the blond boy had presented him to.

It had been kind of strange to be greeted along the hallway by someone who wasn't a portrait; he had actually stood there in shock for a moment, before finally gathering enough courage to reply to the 'Hi'.

Tracey was still laughing about it, and trying to find ways to bring it up as much as possible, even at the present.

As he began to walk towards the dining hall, Draco walking ahead with two boys called Gregory and Vincent, he could distinctively hear

the sneers coming from the Gryffindors walking in group next to them...the fact he had mixed with the Slytherin meant nothing of course: if he was going to be ignored in any case, then he'd go all in.

"She's such a twat! Know-it-all..."

"If you say so Ron..."

"I mean, 'you have to do it like this', or 'that's wrong! It's fluxweed!' argh...she's insufferable."

Whoever they were talking about was apparently a female, but as he heard more and more insults coming their way, he sighed. He had thought that his cousin had a bone to pick with him, not that she would be 'vicious' in general.

"Hey watch it!" A Gryffindor exclaimed, as Harry turned his head just in time to see a bushy brown haired girl run away crying. So they had been talking about Hermione, who apparently had heard them and was now heading away from the crowd that was going in the opposite direction.

One side of Harry knew that it wasn't really his business, another side of him wanted to snap at his cousin and his friend, but a third side of him was just saddened by the entire thing. Maybe it had to do with him being at the center of the giant prank/snubbing because of his friends, but still...

"Is she a muggleborn, that Granger?" Vincent asked, only for Draco to nod silently and keep on striding. It wasn't like Vincent and Gregory stood on the line of 'chivalry' or on that of 'let's burn the muggle', but in Slytherin, you couldn't associate with people who at least weren't pureblood; it had something to do with the magical Nazi party's propaganda.

Still, his father always told him that girls shouldn't be made to cry: it wasn't the Dursley's way of doing things. Breaking the nose of the offender, that was the Dursley's way of getting a girl...at least hearing from his father...who hadn't replied to him once by owl.

At first he had thought it strange, but when they had told him that the castle was actually in Scotland of all places, he had relatively

calmed himself. Owls weren't supersonic jets, and they too needed time to rest between travels.

He had tried to enter the doorway that led everywhere, only to discover that the first time around he had been fooled. The door didn't lead anywhere really existing. Instead, it just recreated a one floor room a piece at the time, even the first floor of his house if he needed it, but didn't actually transport him all the way back to Privet Drive.

So he could be at home, if he wanted to, but it wasn't actually his home...just a thing like the theater's props being in place.

The windows even gave onto Hogwart's outside for one thing...and the fridge was empty.

It was however a far nicer place to study in than the abandoned room on the second floor, and when he had finally come to term with the Bloody Baron not showing himself again, he'd moved there. That was when he had finally understood just what the room actually was.

He had been thinking about how he was going to study magic and spells, while walking the proverbial three times in front of the door, and once he had opened the door he had found himself in a strangely eerie lit room. There were no windows, only shelves upon shelves of books piled around in a circle where at the dead center of it all stood a wooden table with a miniature of Hogwarts' castle, complete with flying banners. There was enough room between the miniature and the edge of the table for him to read some books, and while there wasn't a chimney or a window, the light still came from a clearly invisible source as too did the heat.

That was where he had learnt the Trudo spell. That was where he had learned the Lumos and the Flipendo.

That was where he was going to return, after the Halloween party, to learn the Cuspis Terrae spell of Transfiguration. It was the same spell he had heard in his dream after all...it had to mean something, right?

However, as his mind tried to decide whether or not go and follow the girl, the decision was taken away by him by the time he realized

his feet were actually moving away from the crowd and into the hallways, right behind the girl.

Sometimes, his feet did just that: they moved on their own without him even realizing it, kind of like somebody or someone was guiding his steps.

Whoever it or he or she was however, it appeared the intention was clear: go and console the girl...sometimes, he hated his subconscious. He wasn't good at speaking with girls!

Draco

If there was one thing that Draco hated, it was courageous idiots. Slytherin was made by those of ambition and cunningness, and the first rule was that one shouldn't barge in on a problem head on, but have someone else charge while staying back and laying low for the cheap shot to finish the battle.

At first, he had befriended Harry because he had been of Ravenclaw and a pureblood too. He had thought that having someone to copy the homework from would be quite beneficial in his school life, and he would have been proven right, if he hadn't forgotten about Harry Dursley in the next two minutes.

The point being his bloc notes, his secret journal that so clearly wasn't a diary, hadn't. So when he had discovered the written words on him having made contact with Mr. Dursley, with the words 'pureblood scion' strangely attached to it a few days later, he had come to the startling conclusion that someone was making sure he wouldn't befriend the boy.

So he had done just the opposite, and had gone straight out to his head of the house.

He had thought about Obliviate or Imperius, and had actually explained his ideas to the professor who, instead, had merely looked at him with curiosity before showing him a little note with some words scribbled in it. He didn't quite remember what the words had been, or actually much of anything on it, but he knew that his journal had now the words 'Genuinely befriend and present to other friends' right next to Harry Dursley's name on it.

He usually kept the 'Genuinely' adjective only for a few selected persons, but he had never told anyone of his way of 'dividing' his friends through adjectives. A normal 'befriend' just meant a pawn or a tool...but the genuinely?

So, when he saw Harry head off like a possessed to run after the muggleborn witch, Draco was conflicted. On one side, he had kind of come to terms with the fact that Harry was a good friend to have. Quiet, sympathetic, and who clearly stated his thoughts on things while keeping his own philosophy. Sure, he had been muggle-raised, but there wasn't much of Harry's attitude that was negative, at least, he was a bit aloof and moody sometimes, and his eyes did possess some sort of gleam that made alarm bells ring in his head, but all in all he could understand the 'Genuinely'.

On the other side, he was quietly pondering why his friend had decided to go after the stupid and crying mudblood. It wasn't like she actually needed a hand, did she? He wasn't one to take on his father's words at point blank value; his mother had taught him that much and he had had the decency to listen to her, but still...

What was he? An Auror? Did he really have to follow the boy like a shadow? He'd let him go and then he'd probably ask him what it was all about the next time they saw each other.

It wasn't like there was anything dangerous lurking around Hogwarts, was there?

Harry

The girl was apparently crying in a stall of the girl's bathroom. He did feel kind of queasy actually, just why was he actually thinking he could help her? Standing outside of the bathroom was bad enough, but missing the feast? Of course he'd manage to get some food from the kitchens, by now the elves had no trouble delivering it to him in his 'study' room to begin with...but it still sucked he'd have to eat it reheated.

Waiting outside for a while, Harry's eyes caught the sight of a strange hulking creature that was apparently heading towards him, wooden club in hand. They were, after all, in the dungeons.

"Hello," he muttered, looking at the creature that emanated a horrendous stench. The creature actually stopped to look at him, "Can I help you?" He had seen giants already, and ghosts...maybe this guy was in charge of the bathrooms?

The thing looked at him for a moment, before sniffing the air.

"You need to clean the bathroom?" He queried slowly, as the thing let out a loud belch of reply. Well...the thing was being very informative. The disgusting smell that came out however nearly made him sick.

"Hey! Hermione, right? Could you come out please?" Harry asked the girl from the entrance of the door, the hulking creature just behind him and looking a bit perplexed at the entire scene.

"Go away!" Hermione replied with a slight screech.

"There's the toilet cleaning guy out here...he'd like to have the bathroom empty, you know?" Harry deadpanned, "I'm really sorry sir: she's going to come out soon." The boy added, as the thing's eyes settled on him for yet another second.

"I...Just a moment." The girl whimpered, probably trying to compose herself before coming out of the bathroom. It was just when she came out, that she looked at the Janitor and screamed. That made Harry startle in shock: what was it? Was there a spider somewhere? The janitor wasn't the cleanliest, but still to go and outright scream at him...

"TROLL!" Hermione yelled while running back inside.

"Eh?" That was all that Harry managed to say before he heard the distinctive scream of 'Flipendo' come from the other end of the corridor. His eyes looked for a brief glance at the blond hair of Draco, who had apparently cast the spell...at him.

He felt himself being lifted off his feet and thrown inside the bathroom, seconds before the wooden club of the Troll came down where he had just been a second before.

Well...Draco had apparently saved his life.

"Harry! You alright!?" The boy's gurgled scream was practically a halfway sure sign that trolls in the dungeon weren't a common sight.

"Could be better!" He yelled back, slowly getting up to his feet, and his wand in hand. Hermione was hiding beneath the sinks, huddled and crying.

"I'll try and distract him Harry! Try and get...oh right, he's..." the last words were barely at voice level, and with the roaring troll entering the bathroom after cracking open the door, well...Harry hadn't heard him at all.

The boy gulped, his hand sweating strongly as he could see in the eyes of the troll the feral glint of hunger and...and probably the desire to smash him to bits with his wooden club. Where had the troll found a wooden club to begin with!?

He raised his wand, ready to fight...would Flipendo actually work on a thing like that? He'd need to try the Trudo spell...but it was the first time he used it on something actually alive...

"Kill...or die..."

The voice once more whispered in his ears. Of course the Bloody Baron had decided to make his presence known just then: at least, that was who Harry thought the whisperer was. Only that ghost would come up with half-hissed words in the middle of him...oh hell...he was going to die there.

He was frozen by fear now, the thing was looming closer and closer and...

"Burn the trolls' dongs, chop them to bits, make a stew and gulp it all down! Cause that's the way of the crown!"

"That song is both extremely disturbing and a slander. Who'd eat a troll's dong?"

"Ah my dear...but that's the way of the crown!"

"Trudo." His eyes narrowed in firmness, as he thrust his wand forward with enough speed that he could distinctively hear his elbow snap with a satisfying crack sound. From the tip of his wand, a wave

of ethereal lances thrust themselves forward, hitting the troll with apparently enough force to send him reeling backwards, albeit not enough to make him topple over.

The lances disappeared a second later, but the troll did not and, instead, decidedly looked pissed and angry at Harry.

He'd need to be more determined apparently...or die as some sort of smashed body...no!

He wasn't going to die there and then only because there was a Troll of all things hanging around and swinging his club at him!

Harry barely managed to jump backwards, avoiding the club that smashed the floor's surface so hard it actually cracked the wood. Stone always defeated wood after all.

Stone...

Harry gritted his teeth. He had never managed to make a spell work the first time, no matter what happened or how much conviction he put into it. The spells always had to be tested by him and he had to train for countless hours before even managing an inch of success. There was no way he'd manage...

Intent...it was all in the intent...maybe he could manage another explosive Wingardium Leviosa?

Who was he kidding? He was just a kid eleven years old...he was going to die in that bathroom right next to a crying girl who was hiding beneath the sink and...and who had run away!

He just blinked then. Maybe the girl had gone to get help, and not to simply leave him there and face his inevitable death to a bloody pulp because of Troll. If only the girl hadn't screamed...

"Trudo!" Harry yelled again, but this time far less than a single lance emerged from the tip of his wand, that was so easily deflected by the thick skin of the troll.

He was afraid. He was frightened, he just wanted to go home and stay hidden beneath the sheets...he didn't want this. He...

"Kill him!"

"Just die already!" Harry screamed, "Trudo! Trudo! Trudo!"

He wasn't going to die in there! No. He wouldn't.

He wouldn't die alone and be jolted down as just a casualty. If he had to kill the damn thing, then he would!

The Troll roared once more, taking another step forward. It was then, just as the wooden club came swiping down on him, just as he saw death coming outright to claim him...that Harry sighed and left himself go.

Well...there was no point whatsoever in delaying the inevitable right?

"Flipendo!" Another voice, female, yelled the spell's name as the wooden club outright landed with a deafening crack near him...but not on him.

Apparently, his cousin whom he hated and from whom he was hated had come to save him. For just a second, he was actually glad and relieved. Then, of course, he heard her talk.

"Harry! Are you alright!?" Of course he was alright...just meeting a friendly neighborhood troll who apparently wanted him as a snack.

A jam snack, of course.

"What do you think!?" He snarled back at her, before growling to himself...He knew he shouldn't act like that, but being ignored and then suddenly coming up weeks later like nothing had happened? This wasn't going to stand. For all that he knew she could have placed the troll there just to have a nice laugh at him.

"Troll's skin is thick and resistant to magic!" A shrill voice, belonging to Hermione, piped in from the end of the bathroom...so the Gryffindor girl had gone and gotten reinforcements...from the very girl who had been insulting her? Typical.

Where was Draco anyway?

Probably gone to get a professor: that would have been the smart thing to do...not bloody try and fight a troll head-on.

And then Lillian jumped on the back of the troll. Harry swiftly rolled on the ground, as the troll swiped his club around him at the feeling of something on his neck. Was the girl mad? What was she thinking grappling a troll of all things!?

"Burn the troll..." He muttered to himself, with half the feeling of just waiting for the troll to come and kill him.

"Incendio..."

The troll's body spun one more time, his club ending up firmly entrenched against the bathroom's mirror and staying stuck there. Having lost his 'war' club, the monster finally dropped it in favor of his hands, both of which could easily move and grab with strength Lillian, before roaring at her.

Harry heard his cousin scream, and as his blood froze, his mind did the only thing he could do.

When facing an enemy, aim at the head: headshots multiply the damage.

"Trudo!" A barrage of ethereal lances flung themselves like missiles against the troll's upper body, tearing apart chunks of flesh and muscles and blood, while his head ended up being outright severed and thrown by the momentum of the magical lances across the bathroom, finally landing at Hermione's feet.

The troll's body suddenly underwent spasms for a moment, before falling limp on the ground with a soft crash. Lillian Potter was now covered in blood, but still pretty much alive. Blood was sprayed everywhere in the room, and even Harry was slightly covered in it.

It looked just like a slaughterhouse.

A slaughterhouse he had created...with a single spell.

"It's just like a gun..." He remembered his words of course...oh just how wrong had he been?

This wasn't a gun...this was a plasma rifle, a MIRV unit, this was a...a nuke. The wooden wand he had so aptly dismissed wasn't just a tool to make things fly or do strange and funny things. It was a tool for murder too.

An incredibly apt tool for murder...just like had done in that moment.

He felt sick.

He felt the need to retch and puke...and as his hand touched the slimy and viscous red ground, he did just that. Bent in two from the shock and the disgusting feelings that were hovering over him, he emptied his stomach...that...

That thing had been killed by him.

He was a murderer.

Harry James Dursley was a murderer.

His parents would be so proud now, wouldn't they?

Severus

"That was extremely risky."

"It went well anyway, didn't it?"

"Damn mutt got my leg."

"I'm surprised nobody reacted faster...young Harry is growing up so fast, isn't he?"

"I can't Obliviate something of that magnitude."

"I didn't ask you to, Severus."

"Then what?"

"Just let time do its course...I'll take care of the rest."

Harry

When his eyes opened, he found himself staring at the really rarely seen face of an outright angry professor Flitwick. It was a first to see the small man angry, but considering his head barely reached his shoulder now that he was laying on the nurse's bed, maybe it was that that made him all the more scary.

"Mr. Dursley." The professor began, "On one side, I am extremely keen on removing enough points from Ravenclaw to bring the house on a negative..." At that menace, the boy flinched, "On the other side, I find myself willing to just give you a four numbered amount of points for the extraordinary display of magical prowess you have demonstrated."

Harry now blinked owlshly...he had killed a troll! Weren't they...the janitors of Hogwarts?

"Mr. Malfoy went right ahead to call professor Snape, who in turn called me to come and assist. When we arrived, you were as white as a sheet, but with little to no injuries. The troll on the other hand..." Harry turned slightly green as he remembered just how the troll had ended up becoming, "Anyway. Enough of that." Filius shook his head quickly.

"Professor? Shouldn't...I mean...I killed him." Harry whispered.

"That you did, and while murder is an act to be frowned upon, you were just defending yourself." Flitwick remarked, "And trolls are nothing more than savage beasts...think of it as putting down a rabid dog."

Harry said nothing, his mind slowly coming to terms with what had happened before sighing in relief. He wasn't going to prison. It was enough. Wait...did that make him a hero?

"Unfortunately," the Ravenclaw head of the house remarked, "The news that travelled around was quite different..." A feeling of dread pitched itself deeply in Harry's stomach: why did he feel he wasn't he going to like the next words?

"Miss Potter was hailed as the savior of Miss Granger and yourself; I did try my best to relate what really happened, but nothing apparently changed so..."

At first, his first thought had been to yell about the unfairness of it all. He had been the one to get there first, and to fight off the troll and distract it long enough for Hermione to escape. He had been the one to kill it in the end and he should have been hailed as the savior, the hero, the good and powerful guy...but in the end, he just sighed. The breath came out of his throat as a small hesitant smile appeared on his face.

"It's alright professor...I'm...I'm not hero material after all..."

"This is a wonderful display of maturity, Mr. Dursley." Filius noted with a light smirk, "From what I heard from your friends, namely young Mr. Malfoy, you seem to be an avid devourer of books. Since I do believe that acts of heroism should be rewarded, as long as they don't end up being borderline stupid, I had this permit written for you." Having said that, the small man deftly handed over a small note with his signature to the boy.

"With that in hand, you will be granted a one hour extra time over curfew, which you may spend in the library...Don't fall asleep in there however!"

Harry's eyes bulged in surprise and shock. If he knew anything of Ravenclaw, it was that permission to study on books for more time than normal was some sort of highly placed prize. The reward wasn't a small pat on the back. It was something good. Really good.

"I hope your time at Hogwarts will be devoid of any more of these events, Mr. Dursley," Filius pointed out as he turned to leave, "But with magic involved, who am I to tell?" The last part had been whispered in such a low tone, that Harry hadn't even heard it...

Not that it mattered much, as the boy was currently looking at the small note like it was some sort of highly fragile parchment.

He had an extra hour.

The next time...he'd be more prepared. The next time, he'd be the one hailed as a hero...he'd make sure nobody would make the same mistake twice.

"Burn the trolls' dongs, chop them to bits, make a stew and gulp it all down! Cause that's the way of the crown!"

As he found himself humming that little bit of a ballad song, he stopped. Just where had he heard that? And...and he didn't much care about it then...he was just tired.

He'd take a nap and delve on the mystery of his knowledge of songs later on...maybe after learning the Cuspis Terrae spell.

Author's notes

Troll fight done! And hints which I keep on piling up.

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 17

With October gone, and November arriving, the period of Quidditch began.

While many students walked upon the snowy grounds of Hogwarts, fighting the cold with mittens to make puppets of snow, Harry Dursley was standing in the circular room that had become his training grounds. His wand had apparently had a change of heart, because now it actually obeyed him. He didn't know what had brought forward the change, but he did know that whatever it was, it worked as long as he didn't doubt himself.

Letting his wand move through the air with grace, he brought the tip down on the floor of the room and with that, spikes of earth emerged from the very ground, their tips sharp and their intent lethal. As soon as he removed the tip, the earth lances disappeared within the very ground. This attack was lethal, but for completely different ways.

Transfiguration for warfare was the most feared of magical abilities. Not because of the power of the spells, but because there was no light being shot. If someone flung a Flipendo, or any other spell for what mattered, there would always be a small red or green light coming out from the tip of the wand.

Cuspis Terrae was a transfiguration magic related directly to touching the ground, and then conjuring the spikes in a surrounding area of width varying depending on the degree of mastery held.

There was no light to give away the spell.

Of course the movement of bowing down to touch the ground wasn't of the most subtle, but it was a small price to pay.

Half a dozen wizards had found their deaths casting said spell and being taken by a crossbow bolt in the neck though...which kind of made it one of the first spell taught and also one of the least used.

"If only there was a window in here..." Harry muttered, his gaze settling upon the rows of shelves that, apparently, began to tighten themselves up enough to create a small empty spot on the wall, from which a window appeared to give on the outside. The sun was

high enough for it to be way past the flying lesson's hour, and thus he sighed before setting off for astronomy.

He had tried to gain interest in the matter, but stars and space weren't...to his liking. Unluckily, while one could be exonerated from flying by simply talking to the nurse, and blaming vertigo and glass-wearing, one couldn't just leave astronomy. The phobia of stars, if it existed, wasn't something easy to fake.

Harry niftily placed his study books back in his school bag, making sure to keep the small slips of paper that signaled the pages he had reached clearly within the boundaries of the books. It wouldn't do to keep his books messy.

"A neat work reflects a neat mind."

The thought struck him as his hand went to the door to open it, but not actually giving it any more weight than needed, he found himself staring at the back of the Architect statue that stood looking over the great entrance to Hogwarts.

He blinked once, before closing the door behind him: why was he even trying to make any sense of what happened to him at Hogwarts? He mustered a groan as he began his silent walk upwards, half muttering curses at the thought of the flight of stairs to take to get to the library, then head over to dinner, and finally wait the final hours before astronomy hours at midnight.

It was as he sat down near the usual table, that he realized the mood around the Slytherin compartment of the library was quite sour.

'Can't believe it' and 'what the hell' were the typical mutters followed by strings of curses uttered under their breaths. Draco was looking down at his book, but he was indeed holding the sides of the leather bound tome tightly. Next to him, Gregory was grumbling something under his breath, and elaborated once the raised eyebrow of Harry came into view.

"Miss. Potter," the tone was sarcastic alright, "In view of her heroism in saving two students, and her incredible flight abilities...was made the new seeker of the Gryffindor's Quidditch team." The eyebrow of Harry remained raised.

"As a first year, she is the youngest seeker of the century for Hogwarts, and she has been gifted a recently minted Nimbus Two-thousand." The eyebrow was starting to crank up for staying upwards, but Harry was still waiting for the point.

"Oh come on! You can't be that thick!" Vincent snapped, "They bloody hell favored her because she's the Girl who Lived!"

"So she's bound to make her team lose, right?" Harry asked back.

"It would, if the Nimbus wasn't the top of the line broom while the school issued one are barely even flying to begin with." Draco hissed slowly, "Do you see? It's always like that. Gryffindors get prized for things they didn't do only because they were the loudest of the bunch. They get permissions, excuses, they get benefits and privileges for things other have to sweat for. Do you know that for defeating the Troll, the headmaster gave Gryffindor fifty points? Like what you and I did meant nothing, and you frigging killed the Troll!"

"Then what should we do?" Harry replied smoothly, "Utter curses at them from behind their back? Burn her broom? Do pranks on her? Should we attack her? Backstab her? Should we disembowel her in the hallway?" His eyes narrowed, "Do you know what the first tenant of warfare is, Draco?"

Draco's eyes were bulging in shock, as his mouth was slightly open, but no words escaped. Of all things, he probably hadn't expected him to speak like that. Well, maybe he had laid it too thickly to begin with.

"It is to solve all conflicts with efficiency and ruthlessness...and as quickly as possible." He muttered. "This? This whining in a corner of the library, or sulking and moping around...it doesn't work, it's not effective, and it makes Slytherin look bad."

"What the hell does a Ravenclaw know about what makes Slytherin look bad or not!?" Marcus Flint, chaser for Slytherin, snapped at him having probably heard him. Draco had presented the boy in some sort of twisted way to make him interested in Quidditch. The only result had been him completely ignoring the sport from that moment onwards.

"All the dark lords hail from Slytherin." Harry hissed back. "That is the biggest load of bullshit ever to be created. But it's the only one that sticks around...you know why? Because Ravenclaw dark lords are so bloody damn good at their jobs that they aren't caught!" He narrowed his eyes, "Gladsgow Martin was a Ravenclaw who went to Russia around the time of the Russian revolution. He went by the name of 'Rasputin', forced the entire Zardom to collapse, and came back years later as a 'Lenin'...time is but a door after all."

Flint narrowed his eyes, and so Harry spoke again.

"Do you know why the Fat friar of Hufflepuff is a ghost?" He asked, making a light smile.

"Why? Killed some people?" Flint snorted.

"Oh, he should be the 'Bloody' Fat friar actually." Harry grinned, "Do you know that during his travels in Iceland, just so casually that island accepted Christianity as a religion? Of course the disappearances of muggles of other faiths around that period were attributed to Giants of all things but that's not the point isn't it? You know that in the Middle East, the caliphates began to face their steep decline just around the time the Friar went over there to build a church?" His smile had to be positively feral, because even Flint was wincing away.

"Slytherin might be good schemers..." He muttered, "But trust me on this, Flint...you don't want to see what a Ravenclaw can really do."

"So...we murder the girl who lived?" Draco asked, looking at him as if he had grown a second head.

"Of course not!" He replied hotly. "You didn't hear a word I said, did you?" Harry narrowed his eyes, before tapping on the book he was currently reading publicly.

"If there are fortifications surrounding France, then we must blitzkrieg through the neutral countries." Seeing the looks of confusion etched on their face, he sighed before explaining, "We beat them in another area. We lost ground on Quidditch? Then let's take it back on the other areas...you say Slytherin is getting it bad since centuries? Then...then let's turn the table around." He opened

his book of Hogwarts, a History, at the page with the symbols of the four houses.

"There isn't only Gryffindor and Slytherin: there are also Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw." As he said that, his index went over the two usually 'neutral' houses. "They are our Switzerland. We must conquer them to leave Gryffindor alone. You say it's unfair that the girl who lived got all the fame and glory? Then let's take it all away...from her entire house." He smiled broadly, seeing the glint of understanding in their eyes. "First off, we must begin with Propaganda."

"Propa-what?" Vincent's question was stopped by Draco elbowing him in the ribs.

"Draco!" Harry hissed warningly at the blond boy.

"What?" The boy replied bewildered.

"No hitting! We are all on the same side, and questions are always worthy of being answered!"

"But..."

"Let me finish." Harry muttered, raising a hand. "Propaganda is, Vincent, the act of delivering information from a specific perspective that puts the target in a good or bad way, depending on what the objective is. Right now, we want to make Slytherin look good and put Gryffindor in its place." He pointed out, "For that, no hitting one another: act like Hufflepuffs."

"But that's demeaning!" Gregory whined, only for Harry to level him a glare that could have killed him.

"No! That's the all point of the ruse!" He muttered. "If we help the Hufflepuffs, whom will they give their loyalty to? If we aid the Ravensclaws, to whom will they share their wits?"

"You speak as if you're Slytherin, you know that, Dursley?" Terence Higgs remarked drily, a small smile on his face. He had apparently scuttled closer to listen, as a couple of other students from the same house did too.

"Good to know." Harry muttered back, "At first, there weren't houses to divide Hogwarts. The founders themselves were but teachers of the school. Appeal to that when they question your motives: you want to bring unity back to Hogwarts. You want a single student corps, a single House, a single School." And only one Fuhrer...

Oh hell. He was using Nazi theology on the Slytherin...and it was actually working! He didn't know whether to cry or not because of that. Give the disgruntled masses a single enemy, and unite them under said banner...and you will possess a loyalty you will find nowhere else.

"And how should we help them?" Pucey, one of the Slytherin chasers, asked.

"Well, by being friendly and helping them out with their homework." Harry smiled. "Or by stopping whatsoever bullying might be going on. By defending the guys the Weasley twin prank, by helping out the caretaker, the professors, the groundskeeper...by acting just the opposite of what they expect of you...you will remove the few attacks the Gryffindor use to act against you."

"Why should we bother though?" A voice muttered, "We already won the house cup seven times in a row: this year won't be any different."

And Harry...he just chuckled.

"What is there today that wasn't there yesterday?" And as he asked that question, his eyes settled on Draco.

"The Girl who lived." Draco replied, quickly understanding. "I got it." The blond boy muttered.

"Explain it, would you?" The same voice as before...Nott, was it?

"This year, they changed the flying and defense against the dark arts professors." Draco pointed out. "One is the Girl who lived' father and the other is her godfather. They both already assigned her enough points to actually put Gryffindor as second best, and we're scrounging by because professor Snape tries to give us points when he can...but Quidditch is practically what gave us the edge the last years."

"Wait." Harry hissed, "You're telling me the Quidditch sport actually gives points!?"

"Yeah, you didn't know? The difference in score between the two houses gives extra points to the winner side." Flint pointed out, only for Harry to groan.

"You won't get the house cup this year then." As soon as he said that, pandemonium erupted around the table, forcing Madam Pince to come around and throw them all out.

As the entire group was outside, of course Harry was literally pinned next to the wall.

"What do you mean?" Flint pointed his finger at him accusingly.

"The truth is a mean thing," Harry whispered, "But if you accept it, you can look forward to the outcome: listen to me and listen well."

Harry pointed to Draco to come closer, and then he began to speak once more.

"Let's say that, instead of the girl who lived, Draco here had become the youngest seeker in the century of Hogwarts."

"Fat chance." A few of the group replied.

"Anyway. Do you know what would have happened the moment Severus Snape handed him over a new Nimbus two-thousand?"

"What? Except I'd have a broom?" Draco queried.

"Dumbledore would have taken it away." And with that, silence reigned.

"You understand, don't you?" Harry muttered shaking his head. "You will not win the house cup this year. Dumbledore will see to that. He has broken rules to make sure Gryffindor would have the best chances, so no: you will not have the house cup."

"That's preposterous! He's the Headmaster! He can't be biased!"

"He can." Severus remarked drily, and with his voice, the Slytherin group practically jumped and turned to face their head of the house.

"This isn't what it seems professor." Flint hastily began, only for the potion's master to cut him off.

"Why, I'd like to think that too Mr. Flint...so explain the situation to me."

"We were speaking of Quidditch." Harry immediately interrupted, taking a step forward. "We spoke a bit hotly on Cannons and...England and we were kicked out of there. It was just friendly banter professor, nothing more."

"Yeah, just that!" Flint quickly agreed, nodding vigorously.

"Oh?" Professor Snape's eyes settled on Harry's for a moment, whereas the boy flinched and shied away a few seconds later.

"Well then, carry on...though I might suggest you bring your discussions to someplace more private? Even the walls have ears after all." And with those curt words, Snape turned to leave. "And do remember my words, my young snakes: true neutrality does not exist."

"Share the word with all other Slytherin." Harry whispered, as soon as the professor was gone. "You do not actually need to act...just to talk and catch the moment. It's true, you won't probably win the house cup, but if you actually do as I say..." and with that, he turned around to start walking away from the group, "Then you'd at least change Slytherin's reputation and cast the Gryffindor as a bunch of self-absorbed twats who can break rules and get prizes for that...and that is something Hufflepuffs hate, isn't it?"

And then he walked away, leaving the Slytherin to their thoughts. He had barely turned the corner that he came face to face with someone he would have rather not met.

Hermione

She had spent half of the day hoping to catch a glimpse of the boy that had stalled the troll in the bathroom long enough for her to go and call a professor. She hadn't yet thanked him for having helped

her, and she had promised herself she would at the very least get his name. All that she knew was that he had blond hair, and that he was in Slytherin. Since she had heard the Patil twins talk about Draco's apparent fits of jealousy over the girl who lived, and that he usually grumbled with some of the Slytherin in the library, she had thought she'd get at the very least a talking chance.

If of course the blond boy didn't hex her for being a muggle-born, because half the Slytherin were after all pureblooded bigots and the other half hated Gryffindor...and she was probably the embodiment of what they all hated. Still, she had gone to Gryffindor to change, she had gone there to become someone brave at heart and she wouldn't die from just thanking him now, would she? He had after all saved her life, just like Lillian and Ron.

She was in luck. She had just rounded the corner to find that indeed, Draco was apparently walking on the way opposite of her, and he was quite actually alone in that moment.

"Ehi!" She said, trying to catch the young wizard's attention, only for the blond boy to snort and then halfway stop himself...which was quite comical actually.

"W...What do you want?" He asked, his voice apparently conflicted, but while his eyes weren't actually looking at her, it was still better than nothing.

"I...I wanted to thank you for having found me and having...distracted the troll." She began, only for Draco to stare at her in disbelief, before looking somewhere behind her and then outright snap.

"It was Harry for Merlin's beard! He was the one who actually moved to help you! I wouldn't care less what the hell might happen to a mudblood like you, but Harry's a bloody idiot and that's that! Go and thank Harry instead of me! You just passed him at the corner you arrogant b...!"

"Slugulus Eructo!" The voice startled her, because it came from an outright furious Ron Weasley, who had apparently come from behind Draco and hit him with a curse.

"Ron!" Hermione exclaimed, only to jump backwards as Draco fell on the ground, spewing slugs of all things.

"What? Hermione! He just insulted you! Come away and let him taste the slugs." Ron snarled, grabbing the girl by the arm and pulling her away from the slug-vomiting boy.

"But..."

"It's a harmless curse Hermione." Ron muttered, pulling her more strongly. "It's nothing he won't survive, just ten minutes of slug puking. My brothers tested it on me enough times I know what it does...he won't choke on them...though I'd like to think he would, the bloody git calling you that."

"That what?" Hermione muttered, bewildered and not understanding.

"That word...Mud..."

"Mudblood?" As soon as she said that, Ron flinched slightly.

"Yeah...it's a really bad word around here. Different from the 'Pureblood' who only have wizards in their family lines...it's really insulting."

Hermione stayed silent for a moment, before she finally pulled herself free from Ron's grip and began to walk next to him, huffing in annoyance.

"Anyway...was there someone else in the bathroom except you and Lillian?" This 'Harry'...why was the name familiar to her?

"Not that I remember...that bloody git was outside, running to get help from his professor. Snape probably came by and killed the troll."

No. That was wrong and that much Hermione knew. Lillian had been captured by the troll and she had been about to be killed, but then the troll had detonated. Its head had rolled down at her feet, because someone had flung a spell at the creature.

A spell that conjured ethereal lances, more than once she had seen that spell in use in the bathroom...the spell had been thrown...

Harry.

Harry had flung the spell that had saved her.

Harry was the same boy she had met on the boat and that...

She remembered him asking her a question, and her not even giving him the time of the day. She had thought that she didn't want to give away soon that she was a 'know-it-all', so she had absent mindedly said to meet at the library and then...then she hadn't gone. She had been busy trying to speak about fashion, with the other girls, whereas she hadn't even known a brand name of the wizardry world.

She had reverted to being smart, but she had ignored the boy at every instance.

She had seen him round the corner, she had looked at him round the corner and she had walked past him and had thanked Draco...with him at her shoulders.

Hermione turned around quickly, and then began to pace back to where Draco had been left.

"Hermione? Where the hell are you going?" Ron asked bewildered.

"I'm going to make a wrong right." She muttered back, but when her steps led her back to the spot where Draco had been retching slugs, the boy wasn't there. Someone had probably moved to take him and bring him to the infirmary...

And she had half a feeling that it had been Harry that had come back.

Harry

"You, Draco, are an idiot." Harry muttered as he paced in front of the blond boy. "You couldn't just let it be, right?"

"I...bleargh...tried." The blond boy whimpered as yet another slug came out.

"I'll make sure to get professor Snape to give enough negative points to Gryffindor they'll need two years before they even see the zero back." Harry swore, before taking a deep breath. "Where the hell is the bloody nurse!?"

"Language Mr. Dursley!" A voice snapped from the other door of the infirmary, "I'm looking for a solution to Mr. Malfoy's problem, but I've never seen it cast before."

"Trying salt wouldn't do?" Harry had never sneered before, but this...this woman was getting on his nerves. It wasn't Madam Pince, but a younger red haired woman whom she had only seen the back of, and after handing over a basket to Draco to puke inside, she had disappeared behind the wooden door.

"That's a muggle solution to normal slugs, Mr. Dursley...I say you took after..." but he had already lifted his hands in the air and had walked out grumbling curses, so he hadn't heard the last part of it.

Harry had stomped straight down towards the dungeons, and then, abruptly, he had stopped.

The next few seconds, Harry blinked, his eyes suddenly bulging in shock as he began to mutter.

"Oh no...no. Nononono. What the...no!" His hands went to his face. "What the hell did I just do? What the hell was I doing? No! That's not...no." He began to shake his head.

"Why did I say anything? Why? I should have kept quiet...what do I care about Quidditch and house cups!?" He began to whimper. "I want no bloody Nazi cult at school...I just want to be left alone..."

"Is that the end of your convictions, young raven?" The baritone voice came from behind him, and as Harry turned around, he came face to face with the serious glare of the Bloody Baron. "Is that all that you can do? Whimper in a corner?"

"I'm not controlling my body!" He yelled back at him, "I didn't want to..."

"Oh no my boy. You wanted to." The Baron spoke again, "And remember your betters, I am Lord Slytherin."

"You!" He pointed his finger at him hotly, "You possessed me! Be gone demon! I exorcise you!" As Harry put his fingers in a cross-like shape, the baron merely looked at him with his eyes flaming.

"I did nothing...though I admit I might have possessed you..." The baron's head inclined itself to the side, "And what I did was merely what you would have wanted to do...if only your condition hadn't been there." The ghost shook his head. "So much potential...oppressed. But a chain is loosening up, now we need the rest to go."

"What are you talking about!? What's my damn condition! What the hell...just...what the hell..." He mumbled slowly, his gaze going downwards to the stone floor.

"It is still too early, young raven..." The ghost spoke again, "but know this: in less than an hour, you brought a change to Hogwarts that centuries could not muster. It might be nothing big. Only a tiny pebble by now...but nurture it, let it grow, and you will have a tree whose roots will be able to tear asunder the very foundation of society...so tell me, please, tell me...why are you doubting yourself so much?" The ghost's question hit him.

Did he doubt himself?

"The Thestral hair is an ancient core...one that works only for those who know how to accept death itself," the ghost spoke slowly, "but the Dementor's shroud is far, far older." The Bloody Baron's voice was monotone as it spoke, but in that lack of emotion, it made it even grimmer. "A Dementor is a beast who sucks the very soul out of people to devour it, consume it, and leave nothing behind. They are beings of pure darkness who consume all happiness around them...are they not?" The question took him by surprise, and as Harry fumbled for an answer, the Baron shook his head.

"Maybe today...in any case, their shroud hides from the world them and their features, and that is the true inner focus...the Dementor's shroud works the best in the hands of those who would do anything to bring forth their ideals and their dreams; for those who would fight tooth and nail, and leave nothing behind but at the same time...for those who do it not for glory, but because they believe it is the right thing to do." The ghost's eyes bore into Harry.

"That wand has not a single ounce of patience for self-doubt, Harry Dursley. That wand is not just a gun or a sword. Wands are instruments of utter destruction or salvation. You may think of yours as a 'fancy stick', but you offend it greatly...true power is to be wielded with respect. But if you have no dreams but to live in ignorance, then the wand will just do that. It will help you achieve just that. Unless you fight your condition, Harry Dursley, you will never win it."

Harry remained quiet, his mind in disarray as he tried to make sense of the wand, of the Bloody Baron's actions, and of everything else that had happened to him. Just what did he want? To remain ignored and learn magic. No.

Yes.

No!

He wanted to remain anonymous. He didn't want to be known. Harry Dursley had to remain ignored by the world.

Why?

The condition. He had a condition. The baron had...

White blinding pain hit him at the back of his head as he collapsed in a startled scream.

"Fight it, young Raven. Fight and muster yourself." The Bloody Baron was currently hovering over Harry, twirling around like a thick mist. "If you can't, if you won't, if you don't...then you will never achieve your greatness!"

"The greatest enemy is oneself, young Raven." The Bloody Baron whispered to his ears, "Even if you lose everything, remember my words for they speak the truth. I know that very well after all..."

And then the Bloody Baron was gone, and a firm hand settled on Harry shoulder, a wand pointed at the side of his head.

"Obliviate."

And all was dark once more.

Author's notes

And this is plot, plot plot plot!

I'm sure some might wonder just 'why' the first few pages had a strangely more vigorous acting Harry with people listening to him. While it might just seem 'out of the air', one reason is possession, and the second one...can't still say it. But we're heading there, so don't worry!

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 18

"The plan is in progress, King."

The message that arrived through his owl post made him raise an eyebrow in surprise. Just what plan were they talking about? And who was this 'King' they were referring to?

Harry had spent the last hour trying to decide if he had to care that Lillian had nearly fallen off her broom, or not to and steer clear from the infirmary. He was still angry at her 'wingman' for having cursed Draco, and he knew that Draco was practically hoping to get a good curse back against the Weasley...but just who the hell was this 'King' eluded him.

Christmas was approaching and still his parents hadn't replied to him. Maybe they had been busy, or maybe the owl had lost itself...but his mind was occupied on other things. Namely, the fact that apparently being possessed wasn't a fantasy but a reality, and that it could lead him to really horrible situations.

He had to steer clear of ghosts. He had to avoid them all like the plague and do his very best to remain inconspicuous and alone.

He had stopped speaking with Draco a few days before, and now all his studies revolved around the room through the magical door. His human contact came with the professor, most of the time only with him delivering homework. Professor Binns was the only one with whom he spoke a bit more, and with whom he managed to bring up the Ravenclaws points. Snape gave him points for the potions and Filius actually gave him subtle nods of approval when he delivered his homework.

Right about then, as soon as he finished his breakfast, he decided he'd go and ask Filch before heading off to Charms. Well, he should call the man Argus actually. The man had insisted upon one of their last talks which had diverged on what actually the caretaker had to use to clean some of most difficult smudges of dirt around the carpets.

Apparently, Argus had never heard about the muggles new inventions in the market of cleaning stuff. The fact that century old dirt was now no longer a threat to his sanity had made the man hug

him in joy once. They had both decided never to speak about it again though.

The man wasn't present in his office, but Mrs. Norris instead was, and as she meowed happily while jumping to get in his arms, Harry merely scratched the cat's neck while murmuring.

"You wouldn't know where Argus went, would you?" The cat purred, not actually wanting to move around much. "Suppose not." The boy sighed.

"And I swear Argus: I caught that Potter girl in the restricted section and...oh." Madam Pince had entered the office, actively and excitedly talking with Argus when she suddenly stilled and assumed her usual stern and glaring attitude.

"Oh Irma, no worries: this here is Harry Dursley, good lad he is. Mrs. Norris adores him," and just like that, Madam Pince's face turned a bit softer.

"I...I saw you a lot in the library now, didn't I?" She asked carefully.

"Yes madam." Harry replied quickly, nodding his head repeatedly as his gaze slowly moved to the side.

"You did treat my books well...I didn't even realize you had actually read them." The woman's murmured tone was a sharp contrast with her usual stiff and stern demeanor, and probably her words were a compliment, because Argus himself was slightly smiling.

"See? Told ya he was a good lad. Always with his head neck deep in books...by the way, was there something you wanted to tell me Harry?" Argus asked looking at him.

"Well...I still haven't received a reply from my parent sir," Harry meekly whispered out, "And...how much time does the owl usually take?"

"Hum...which owl did you use?" The man asked while moving towards a cabinet.

"I think it was number nine sir." Harry replied quickly. Maybe he had missed the letter being received, because he had gone there too

early in the morning for breakfast? It had happened a lot of times before...maybe it was that and he had been worrying for nothing!

"Number nine...oh here he is. Present in the owl tower and last sent letters..." Argus' voice lowered itself a bit, before it strangely returned to normal and maybe a bit over-excessive cheerfulness.

"Well! Your letter was returned to sender. Apparently your parents weren't home when it was delivered...you didn't write them another I suppose." At Filch's words, Harry meekly nodded.

"See? Now shouldn't you be off to charms lad? Don't make me sound like a liar to Irma here: be a good lad and trot off!"

"Alright...thank you Argus! Good day to you too Madam Pince." And after dropping the meowing in displeasure Mrs. Norris, Harry headed off towards Charms.

He had been such an idiot to worry for nothing. He should have checked sooner but he had apparently never found the time to do something as simple as that.

As he hurriedly sat down in the last row, he realized there was still one empty spot next to him, meaning someone else was even later than he was.

Professor Flitwick was just then entering the room, when the disheveled figure of Hermione rushed through the doors and settled down on the last free chair. Just in the nick of time, since the lesson began a few moments afterwards.

"Did he say anything important yet?" She whispered to him and that...that made him look at her for a moment. Since when was she on taking terms with him? No, even better, why did he actually have to answer her?

"No." He replied in a low murmur...he was such a spineless guy. Well, no. He had just answered a question, but that would be all. He wasn't going to forgive the girl for snubbing him outright since the beginning of the term, and especially not even defending the true way things had gone in the bathroom with the troll.

He hadn't expected her to thank him of course, but a bit, just a tiny bit of recognition would have been a great way to mend the fact that she had stood him up...instead nothing. And now, after everything, here the girl was asking him a question...and just like the spineless guy he was he had answered because, after all, one just doesn't start hating girls.

"I'm sorry." The girl whispered, slightly flinching probably from his tone. He looked at her raising an eyebrow. What was the girl sorry for now, he wondered. For having one of her 'friends' curse one of his? For not having given out the real version of facts? Of course he knew what peer pressure could do to people, but...

"For what?" He asked back. Maybe she was sorry for having asked him a question that disrupted his attention from taking notes. Not that it bothered him, because he could do two things at the same time after all, but still...

"I...The library." She whispered, "And the bathroom...I...I'm sorry. I just...ignored you, I think."

"Ignore me, will you? Don't you know that giving your back to the shadows only invite the daggers?"

He blinked once. That...who had spoken just then? It sounded just like an old voice, but...

"I...I see." Harry replied slowly, returning to taking down notes.

"Do you...still have problems with the Wingardium?" Apparently, the girl liked to make conversation even during the charm lesson, a feat that Harry discovered much to his displeasure as the lesson went on and he found himself actually saying 'yes' to meeting the girl at the library that afternoon to compare notes on charms.

He was weak. He admitted that much to himself as he sulkily walked his way to lunch and then later on towards the library. At the very least the way his fellow Housemates treated him hadn't changed, but the murmurs of Slytherins suddenly becoming nicer to them was strange to hear. From all that he knew of, Slytherin tended to be cruel and...cunning and backstabbers.

Twenty points to Ravenclaw later, because of course the names of the first twenty-two users of the flying broomstick earned him that much, and he was happily chatting with professor Binns as the class began to dwindle down.

"But then, why did Alaric the all-mighty face the enemy with but a sword and a shield? Shouldn't he have worn his armor too?" Harry asked curiously.

"It is unknown why." Binns replied slowly, "I deal with facts and not with hearsays, but it is a fact that the day before the battle, Alaric's wife disappeared from the castle. Without his armor, when the poisonous fangs of the war basilisks tore his shield asunder and carved deeply into his flesh, Alaric's death came swiftly."

"So his wife might have stolen the armor?" Harry pressed on.

"Maybe, but remember that Therese the Serene was a most powerful druid witch and she would not leave her beloved one to die, not without a greater cause to move her." Binns repeated carefully. "The event happened around the time the founders names began to earn their fame, and thus history tends to disregard many of the events that circled around that time in favor of Godric Gryffindor's might in battle against the Vampires or Rowena Ravenclaw's furious spell casting upon the hordes of Goblins."

"I see." Harry muttered, "Are there..."

"Books on the argument? Why, I know teachers shouldn't play favorite pupil, but I did indeed have the quickness to prepare some books you might like on the argument." The tone remained completely devoid of emotion, but the ghost's face was anything but that. It held a light smile on his face, more than enough to show that indeed, even ghosts could be pleased.

"Thank you professor." Harry replied with a smile of his own, as he saw the ghost slowly move towards the desk and point at his desk.

"I have Argus to thank. Usually I need to ask the Bloody Baron," here Harry winced, but kept quiet, "to convince Peeves to move the books on my desk. He was quite glad to help you. Usually he wouldn't have even bothered to hear me out, but your name stopped him."

"I just...showed him some cleaning products sir." Taken from the room of 'make a wish and I'll grant it' of course, "I did nothing big."

"I have been a professor for centuries, young Raven." Binns began slowly, "And never has a student given the time of the day to a squib, even less to the caretaker. You think you did little, but in truth you did more than you can understand..."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I mean, Mr. Dursley," and here Binns hovered a bit behind Harry, "that many students wouldn't have even cared to come to know Mr. Filch. You, on the other hand, did. Do you know that Siegfried the butcher slaughtered three enemy villages alone while in grief, upon hearing the news of the death of his lord? And Siegfried was known to be nothing more than an orphan, taken in where others would have just left him to die out in the cold: he was but a squib, and yet he grew to become a fierce warrior. Do not little yourself, Mr. Dursley, it doesn't do you honor."

"Well...but I don't want to start an army." Harry whispered back, only for Binns to actually smile, albeit his tone remained monotone.

"You see, Mr. Dursley...that is precisely why you shouldn't little yourself; but you must be off I suppose, Miss. Granger is waiting for you just out of the door, thinking that centuries of being a professor are no good to catch on eavesdroppers probably."

Harry jerked his head to the side immediately, looking towards the door where indeed Hermione had just appeared, flustered and holding her school bag to her chest.

"Professor, I didn't mean to..."

"Never mind. Run along and remember: next week, five feet and a half essay on Nordic feuds across Sweden." And with that, the ghost dismissed them both.

Harry silently walked next to Hermione, who apparently didn't know how to broach the argument of him actually talking to the ghost professor.

"You like History of magic?" She blurted out.

"I love it." Harry replied, "Especially how Professor Binns explains it."

"You must be the only one." Hermione pointed out, "He nearly makes me fall asleep."

"Oh...but I do fall asleep during his lessons." Harry replied slowly, "It's just that my hand keeps on writing everything my ears hear, so my notes are always word by word. Then I read them afterwards, and it's better than Tolkien."

"What?" The Gryffindor student was looking at him like she was looking at a strange and clearly mad creature...something that kind of hurt him, considered she was the one who wanted to 'make peace' or so it seemed.

"Tolkien? You read The Lord of the Rings?"

"Why does that surprise you? Ravenclaw." He muttered back, gesturing at his robes.

Hermione kept quiet for a moment, before whispering back.

"But you're friends with Draco and Tolkien was a muggle writer. The lord of the rings is a muggle book!"

"Well, yes I'm friends with Draco, but I'm muggle raised," Harry replied shaking his head slightly. Why was that important anyway? Oh right: the prank that half the world decided he had to be in. "I'm not a magical Nazi, if that's what you're thinking of. Draco however was, and still is, my first friend here at Hogwarts. I'm not going to burn muggles, and he knows that too, I'll just...stay in my corner." He shrugged, "Just like the rest of the world does when it comes to me after all. Fair is fair."

"How can you say that!?" Hermione hissed, "What about those who raised you? What if someone burned them, would you let them do that without even fighting!?"

"Of course..." Harry's throat hitched, as he hissed out "Not."

Had he just been about to end his sentence with 'Of course' and nothing more? What was he thinking!? He'd let his mother and father get killed by some Nazi? Just where was his brain!? Where had his common sense gone to!? Was this what people meant, with losing oneself to something else?

But if it meant him living in isolation, alone...wouldn't that be better? All alone, no-one to remember him, no-one near him, no-one to call to him, no-one to speak to him...he chilled.

"Curse...them..."

The voice hissed once more, but right there and then, Hermione was looking at him far more bewildered than usual.

"You know what? You disgust me. You'd let others suffer and do nothing for it...study charms by yourself." And with that, she walked away.

She walked away holding her head all high and mighty, like she knew better, like she was better, like she held everything and he was a nothing.

The halls were empty and the woman was leaving, too prideful to look at him, a no-one. His pride felt stung, his heart broken, had he been but a fool? Had he been but a toy to another's whims? He would show her.

He would destroy her beliefs, her feelings, her beauty and her descendants and leave nothing behind.

That much he swore.

For he was going to be the greatest of them all...and blood would not stand on his way...it would be his way.

Harry blinked, taking a deep gasp for air as he clutched his chest. The halls had appeared so...so different and yet so the same. What had...

"Peeves is peeved." A voice remarked behind him, before the figure of the poltergeist of Hogwarts suddenly appeared upside down in front of him. "Peeves is peeved at seeing a peeved peevish peevish."

"I don't feel very well..." Harry muttered weakly.

"That won't do, not at all!" Peeve exclaimed, "But wait! You...You gave me the fault for something I did not do, didn't you?" The poltergeist suddenly asked, his face appearing in a blink in front of Harry's. "Bad boys should be punished, shouldn't they?"

"I'm sorry!" he meekly coughed out as he took in deep breaths, "But...I..."

"You didn't do it on purpose, right?" Peeves pointed out, a wicked smile now sprouting on his face, "Me neither, you know? I never do things on purpose...they just so casually happen. But you...really...surprise...me." The last words came one after the other, painfully slow and with long pauses, just as Peeves' head rotated on the spot of three hundred and sixty degrees.

"Why?"

Instead of replying, Peeves slowly began to sink deep within the floor of the castle.

"I have hopes! Great hopes! You who are hidden from a hidden foe, at a crossroad of pandemonium and chaos, will your mind...no, when will your mind break I wonder? I'll be there, Harry...you can rest assured that Hogwarts always nurture her children so much...it suffocates them with its pillows." And as the last words came out darkly, the poltergeist completely disappeared into the ground.

Slightly shaking, Harry looked around one last time, before running along the hallway without looking back. He just needed to write home, hope they would answer him...he just had to go back home for Christmas, and everything would be fine.

He knew it. Home would always wait for him, wouldn't it?

He had to buy gifts for his parents, but they hated magical stuff...right?

Yeah, they did.

That night, Harry Dursley could not sleep, hoping and praying to god that his parents would answer his worries. For days, Harry Dursley waited with stilled breath, writing letter upon letter, with renowned vigor and fervor. The eyes around him were judging, the mutters were too much, the ghosts seemed eerie and the portraits scary. He just wanted to go home for Christmas...but no reply ever came.

Was that it?

Did Hermione somehow tell his parents that he'd let them burn?

How could she do that, if she didn't even know their address?

Why was no-one answering his letters at home?

The answer came in a black velvet letter on a cold December day. One day to go till they could head back home with the train, and yet as Harry looked at the letter, he hadn't wanted to think what it meant.

Black could be used for many things after all.

Black could be some sort of code for wizards to say something happy, funny, or good.

Black didn't have to mean death.

Black didn't have to make him...

Black was the color of the crows, of the sky in a moonless night, of utter darkness...but it didn't have to mean...

It was in his training room, closed from everyone else, that he opened the letter.

Mr. Dursley,

Your guardians have renounced their claim on you. As of now, you will become a ward of the ministry and will remain as such until emancipation or unless a suitable guardian applies. We inform you that as a ward of the ministry you will not be granted permissions to Hogsmeade weekends, Christmas or Easter Holidays or any such event outside of the castle's boundaries that isn't the summer period.

You will soon receive a letter confirming which orphanage has been chosen for...

He dropped his letter to the side of him.

No. It wasn't possible.

He had known his parents had hated magic. Calling wizards freaks and all...but he had not expected this.

Wasn't he their children?

Hadn't they accepted him for eleven years?

Why?

Just why?

Because he was a wizard? Because he was a freak?

Was he an orphan now?

He could talk to his cousin, but they hadn't wanted him then, why would they want him now!?

No.

He was alone.

Just like he wanted to be, right?

No...nobody wants to be alone.

He...

He didn't want to be alone. He wanted to have friends, to have a family, to laugh like the others, play like the others. He didn't want to decide on Nazis or Communists, he didn't want to choose between pure or mud blood, he just...

He just wanted to learn magic.

Harry had just wanted to learn magic...and as he began to chuckle, having fallen on his knees in the eerily lit round room, tears began to fall one after the other.

"All alone, huh?" He muttered to no-one, "I'm all alone."

"Curse...them."

A voice hissed near him.

"Oh right, alone and mad." Just perfect. Harry thought, chuckling again while shaking his head.

"Afraid...fear..."

"Good to know I finally snapped." The boy muttered, slowly standing back up. "This had to be a mistake. Maybe it was Peeves...damn it! Peeves, I'll have your head for this prank!" The boy yelled out to the room, quickly wiping out his tears. "You had your laugh didn't you!? Now come on out and face me like a man!"

As Harry's hand grabbed his wand and took it out, he began to look around, just like a dog with his back to the wall. He knew Peeves had to be somewhere close by, he knew this had to be just some sort of sick prank of his.

But no stupid poltergeist came by, and nothing emerged from the dusty shelves or the piles of books. The model of Hogwarts remained the same at the center of the table, with its banners flying.

Harry hadn't realized it, but he had begun to pace in the room, looking just as lost as he could have possibly become.

What could he do?

"My lord...I await."

Now the hiss was definitively not his imagination.

"Who's there?" He asked.

But no reply, of course, came.

"Let's be logical." Harry muttered to himself. "My parents...disowned me? I'm a ward of the ministry? I have a trust fund apparently," set for him, yeah, he remembered that, "so school expenses are done, but..." But he wouldn't go back home ever again.

He wouldn't see his mother ever again.

He wouldn't watch football with his father. He wouldn't open his Christmas gifts with his family.

He would never see Privet Drive 4 again.

"Now...now what do I do?"

Harry asked the question to the empty room, but no reply came forward.

Of course...

He was alone, wasn't he? Just like he wanted...

No.

"I don't want to be alone." He hissed out of his teeth. "I don't want to be ignored. I don't..." He'd go and speak with his cousin.

She would probably understand, wouldn't sh...

The pain he felt made him scream a second later, soon followed by the blinding headache and the outright vicious spasms. No. Yes.

No, he wouldn't go. Yes, he would.

No. Yes.

Yes. No.

He would.

The greatest enemy is oneself, young Raven.

And then Harry's scream fell to his sore throat, his eyes turning red from the tears as his mind finally gave way to the deep darkness of rest once more.

He wouldn't be ignored.

Never again.

Severus

Of all the plans of the world, Severus was, in that moment, in the middle of seeing the most difficult one fail at the same speed of a phoenix' flight. Harry was nowhere to be seen, and yet he had received the letter. This plan was wrong on all levels, and yet he couldn't help but feel that something, something very bad, was going on.

"You worry too much, Severus."

"And you don't worry at all!" He snapped back.

"All is fine."

"No it isn't!" He practically yelled. "Lily's son is..."

"Lily's daughter is currently looking at the mirror of Erised, with her dear friends Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger. They are imagining great adventures and untold riches, recognition and power. Knowledge and peace in the world apparently...but Harry, Harry is just where I wanted him to be."

"You know where he is, don't you!?"

"Of course I do! My, I put him there to begin with! Remember...I am the voice of Hogwarts after all, I know Hogwarts. I am Hogwarts. How could I pass on the opportunity?"

"I should have..."

"You still will, Severus. He will just be a bit different, but it will help him."

"I...I mean, why didn't he come to me immediately? I told him I was friends with his mother after all, we even had tea. The plan was sound and..."

"Severus. When magic is involved, and prophecies twist actions, trust me: nothing is ever meant to go the way one thinks."

"Speaking from experiences?" Severus sneered.

"Of course I do. Of course I do."

"So?"

"So what, Severus?"

"Where is he?"

"The room of requirements."

"Damn it! Nobody can enter the room once occupied!" The potion's master yelled, smashing his fist against the wall in an unprecedented fit of rage.

"Indeed, and normally that would be the case; however what he desired and what he required were different, and the room became a door to somewhere else. Somewhere...that you can access."

"Then tell me for..."

"Shut up, Severus." The voice was now cold, terribly cold.

"I'm sorry, but..."

"No. Never mind...I was young once too. Soon Severus, but not yet."

"Alright..." And with a deep brief, Severus whipped out his wand. "I'm going. Give me a direction or I'll throw Fiendfyre at you."

"Now that is just being a petulant child." The voice remarked with a light chuckled tone. "Alright...now you can go. Founder's room...behind the architect's statue...it does have a blood ward though so..."

But Severus Snape had already dashed out.

"Youngsters...why can't they listen?"

And with that question, the voice stood then quiet.

Harry

"Young raven? Wake up." A female voice called him, as he slowly stirred awake. "Come on young raven, you have to wake up." The voice insisted, and as he blinked and the blurs returned to definition, he looked into the ghostly visage of the Grey Lady.

"Huh?"

"You shouldn't be sleeping here." The ghost pointed out, "It's late and you should be in your bed."

"I..." Harry's words died in his mouth, as he closed his eyes once more.

"Now, none of that young Raven." The Grey Lady spoke, "Your head of the house is really worried about you. Even the Headmaster doesn't know where you are. This place is special after all and kept from all...why don't you want to go outside?"

"My parents..."

"They were not your real ones, were they?"

"But they..."

"Maybe they just didn't want to understand you or magic, but they are hardly all you have, isn't it?" The Grey Lady spoke gently, a small smile on her ghostly face. "I'm here, young Raven. As is that arrogant idiot of the Bloody Baron, who I'm sure is just listening in from a corner of the room...him and his melodramatics."

"I take offense of that, Helena!" The Bloody Baron muttered, emerging from a dark corner, "For I am the..."

"Yeah, I'm dead already Henry, don't kill me with boredom too please."

The Bloody Baron flinched, recoiling slightly.

"That was a low blow, Helena..." The ghost whispered.

"Like what you did to my young Raven?" The Grey Lady retorted hotly, her gaze quite frankly murderous.

"I did what I knew would work!" The Slytherin's ghost exclaimed, "Look at him now! He can finally think for himself for once!"

In that moment, Harry snapped.

"What are you two talking about!?"

"See? Isn't it marvelous?" Henry exclaimed, apparently happy for something.

"I don't know if it's an improvement." Helena deadpanned, before shaking her head. "Anyway...you should leave now. Someone's outside looking for you."

"But...what happened? Why was I hurting, and what improvement are you talking about?" Harry's question was met with Helena slightly inclining her head to the side, before replying with a half amused tone.

"Good question. A badly placed curse? A wrongly applied charm? A really dark ritual? It's quite the conundrum actually...isn't it?" Helena asked gently, like if Harry knew the answer to that.

"So?" Harry asked.

"So nothing, young Raven: I know not what fell upon you, nor do I know if it's gone or still lingering. You fought it off apparently, something I had hoped you wouldn't have to do so young...but someone disagreed. Of course someone always has to disagree with me." The Grey Lady growled lightly, eying the Bloody Baron once more.

For his part, the Baron merely sighed and began to move out towards the door.

"I'll warn the Headmaster."

Helena waited for the ghost to leave, before hovering quickly in front of Harry, and eying him critically. The ghost nodded a couple of times, while making small humming noises, as if lost in thoughts. Finally, with what appeared to be a final decision, it nodded.

"Alright. I know what to give you for Christmas."

"Eh?"

"Stop answering with babbling one-words or questions, young Raven." Helena snapped. "I'm thinking...yes. You'll need a coat and maybe a good cloak too. A long time ago it was of use to buy armors once the first blood had been delivered...but I doubt you'd ever be able to wear a chainmail with your scrawny body." The ghost sighed, which practically made no noise since the dead didn't need to breath.

"There's no need to..."

"Young Raven." Helena growled lightly, "I will not have a des...a student of mine go around in tattered robes."

"But these robes aren't...wait. What did you say?"

"What? I said nothing." The Grey Lady replied, before quickly flying over to the door, "Absolutely nothing!"

"I heard you and I'm not deaf!" Harry murmured. "You said something with des..."

"A deserving student of course." The ghost quickly disappeared beyond the door, and as Harry gave chase, not willing to let the argument go by, he opened the door without thinking.

Two hands grabbed him by the shoulders and pulled him out of the room, the door closing behind him. The next moment, he was being looked at with a furious and stern glare by professor Snape, who was apparently checking him for injuries.

"Are you alright, Mr. Dursley?" Snape queried with his voice tight and slightly angry. "You are way past your curfew hours."

"Professor!" Harry exclaimed, "I fell asleep in the room and I'm sorry..."

"Still, this will be five points from Ravenclaw and detention with me tomorrow night." Severus remarked quickly while standing up, "Now tell me what happened to make you break the rules in such a way?"

"Sir..." The boy fidgeted for a moment, before taking a deep breath and whispering out, "my parents...they renounced their guardianship over me. They always told me wizards were freaks sir, but I thought they had changed their minds and..." as he rambled that off, Snape looked at him with a frown on the face, before slowly nodding.

"I understand your reasons, but rules are there to be followed." The man then began to slowly walk, "Follow me then, Harry, we'll have to settle things with the Headmaster."

As the boy followed quietly the professor, he couldn't help but think about what he had heard. Someone had cast a curse at him that made him suffer? Why would someone do that?

Why would someone throw things like those at him for no reason? And what had improved of him actually? He had no idea, but he knew that they were keeping something hidden from him. If only he could understand what it was, and then...

"Sev!" A voice rang in the corridor, in the dead of the night, making both Harry and Severus turn, albeit the man was actually far paler than he could have possibly been.

A red haired woman was walking towards them, and Harry instinctively recognized her as the assistant nurse of Madam Pomfrey. She had green eyes that much the boy saw when the woman moved closer, and apparently she was wearing a scowl.

"Have you seen Lillian? I know she isn't in her dormitory." The woman muttered.

"No. I...I haven't Lily."

"Alright. And who's this? Could it be the famous wizard son of my dear sister Tuney? What are you doing outside with Sev at this hour

of the night huh? Is everything alright? Your face is just short of having seen a ghost. Yours too Sev..." Lily Potter looked at both of them, her smile slowly fading away. "Is...is something the matter?"

"Mom?" Harry asked, with his throat completely dry.

"Oh no my dear, I'm your mother's sister, you heard Sev here right? I'm Lily Evans Potter, not Petunia. I'll give the fault to the dark this time, but don't try and give me more years than I actually have, women take affront on doing that."

"No...I mean..."

"I have to bring Mr. Dursley to sleep now: he's shocked for Tuney's actions...I'll tell you later. See you. Good night." Quickly, Severus' hands clamped down on Harry's shoulders, and the man actually pulled the boy forwards and out of the way.

"Hey! Let me..."

"Quiet Harry." Severus hissed, "I'll explain...but not here. Not now. Tomorrow, at detention...hold your horses till then, alright?"

"But...they told me..."

"It was for your own good." The potion's master murmured, "And now...Now I don't know what the hell is going on."

And with those words, Harry was literally shoveled inside the Ravenclaw's common room, before the door closed behind him. Instead of turning around to bang on the door, and instead of going outright to bed, he merely slumped down on a comfortable looking pile of notes. The Rooster of Ravenclaw was sleeping in a corner next to the huddled forms of the older Raven students who had fallen asleep studying there.

He had thought he wouldn't fall asleep: his mother was alive. His mother was alive and well and hadn't died in a drunk driver's accident! So...so why did it look anything but that? Why didn't she recognize him? And...Lillian? Lillian Potter? Did that mean that he had a sister?

But...but it made...

It made no sense.

Why had...

What...

And against all odds and thoughts, against everything and all the events of the day, Harry Dursley, no...

Harry Potter, of the house of Ravenclaw, fell asleep.

Author's notes

And another chapter rolls by.

This one brings changes doesn't it?

As you might (or might not) have guessed, Harry's the 'heir' of...

Why should I say something like that?

And who's the mysterious voice?

But, more importantly, what is going to happen now? Well...the questions are there, now is the time to find some answers, right?

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 19

"Hey kid, wake up." A voice drawled out as Harry felt his body being shaken awake by a vigorous man-handling. A Ravenclaw sixth year was currently looking at him with a bit of concern, probably because he was lying atop the notes of the various lessons. "You're going to crumple our notes."

"I'm sorry." He blurted out as he stood up, quickly trying to settle his robes, flustered. The Rooster was walking around making strange gargled noises; apparently somebody had cursed the thing into silence. A few of the Ravenclaw older students looked at him with an amused expression, before one of them exclaimed.

"Hey, it's the Squirt! Been a while: so, still having problems with the Leviosa?" One of them asked, "It's all in the wrist you know?"

"Huh? No, I'm fine now...thanks?"

The older boy merely shrugged, before heading off. "Coffee run!" The boy exclaimed, "For how many?"

"I'll be going to the hall for breakfast." The red haired prefect of Ravenclaw, Basileus, remarked drily. "And then I'll grill our first year and his natural ability with 'Notice-me-not' charms." As the eyes of the older boy settled on him, Harry had half a feeling he wouldn't be getting much alone time to think at breakfast. However, the teenager's words opened his eyes quite comically.

"Notice-me-not?" Harry mouthed, as the red haired Ravenclaw raised an eyebrow at the boy.

"There are various forms of charms, Squirt. The Notice-Me-Not range from illusions to the more plain 'hiding in sight but having the brain believe you are of no consequence' ones...so indeed, considering you give us points during potions, why is it that I, or any of my peers, offered to tutor you in order to increase the 'point harvesting'? The answer is clearly that of you hiding away of course, which brings us to your charms potential if you managed to fool the hereby present assembly of gentlemen known as the 'Owls and Newts battle corps'."

As soon as the boy said that, the rest of the Ravenclaws around him made a mock military salute with wide grins...those who were actually awake and listening.

"But I didn't cast one...I don't even know how to fling one!" Harry retorted, looking around uneasily in search of an escape route probably.

"Uhm..." The Ravenclaw prefect pushed his right hand against his chin in a 'thoughtful' pose, before closing his eyes for a moment, "Interesting. A case of accidental magic? Maybe you were afraid of Hogwarts and tried to hide from all of it?" The boy mused, before yelling back to the rest of the 'corps' with a wide grin on his face. "Guys! We scared to death a poor first year! We simply must make amend."

"Tutoring?" A voice queried.

"Dueling practice?" Another added.

"Divination to see his future?" A third butted in.

"Gift him an animal?" The fourth suggested.

"A cat?"

"So we go through the animal route huh? Then what about an Owl?"

"Why not a toad?"

"No! No Ravenclaw will ever have a toad for as long as I draw breath!"

"What do you have against toads huh!?"

Soon the discussion degenerated into friendly banter, and after a few seconds, Basileus placed a hand firmly on Harry's shoulder.

"Let's go down to eat and leave my dear comrades to discuss what to do." It sounded more like one of those 'offers you can't refuse' than an actual invitation for breakfast, but Harry was too much shell-shocked by the fact people were talking with him again, to actually care.

"Al...Alright? I should take my stuff for potion..."

"Accio Harry's bag!" Basileus smiled, positively feral looking as if there was some sort of inside joke he wasn't privy of, when a bag that actually was Harry's came flying down from the staircase. "We've got little time as it is, Harry...let's not waste it, alright?"

Breakfast came with yet another surprise. As soon as he was sitting, he found himself under the stares of disbelief of half of the Ravenclaw common house already there for breakfast, probably having to do with the fact that he had been literally 'made to seat' next to the older Ravenclaws, and also due to the size of the portions.

He usually had never made that remark, or hadn't really probably bothered to notice, but little by little his portions of food had increased in contrast with that of the other students. The moment he sat down, his 'area' of breakfast table was suddenly engulfed in food.

Literally, Harry's face was hidden by a pile of cakes.

"The House Elves like you, I suppose." Basileus remarked, far more amused than anything else since he could 'partake' from the generous offers of the table.

It was then that Harry discovered another fact: people could whisper about him, and he could actually 'hear' those closest...normally, they'd talk about Quidditch or lessons...now they were talking about him.

"Who's that?"

"Harry Dursley."

"Muggle-raised, pureblood..."

"Friends with Malfoy and Slytherin..."

"Slytherins are turning good recently."

"What the hell did he do to get all that food?"

"Did he charm the tables with Engorgio?"

"He's just a first year."

"Friend with Filch, of all people."

"He's an arrogant twat."

That voice actually made him hurt, but he couldn't pinpoint it in the general ruckus, so he did the only thing he could do in that situation: eat. A piece at the time he scarfed down a couple of muffins, two slices of cake, a cup of tea that suddenly refilled with hot chocolate and then, with a final effort, a couple of croissants.

It was then that he finally realized why he could hear them whisper.

There were no longer four tables around: only one. Christmas vacation had started, and those who could leave had probably done so during breakfast. As luck would have it, the only table that had remained was the Ravenclaw one, meaning Harry hadn't actually realized the fact that in front of him Ron Weasley stood until one of his soufflé had apparently been devoured by the red haired boy.

The boy merely growled at him lightly, for something he had no clue on and that he would definitively not ask.

"Problems, Weasley?" Basileus snapped making the boy wince and mutter a 'no sir'. Harry actually felt slightly...happy, at having someone defend him. Albeit he was wondering what all these changes were about...until he remembered.

His mother was alive, and...and she wasn't at the professors' table, but scanning over there he settled his lost gaze on the potions' master, and then on the headmaster, both apparently having a heated hissed conversation while looking at him. He was feeling uneasy now, actually. It lasted only a moment, and then he was back to looking around the only table.

The Granger girl had left. So too had his...cousin? Sister? Draco of course was no longer there, as many other Slytherin had done the same. Tracey Davis had remained however, and was apparently talking in a hush-hush tone with a Hufflepuff girl that Harry didn't know of. The few Slytherin weren't compacted in a corner, but

spread out across the table, talking with smiles and friendly faces to Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws.

The only ones who had apparently stuck together were the Gryffindors.

Segregation had begun then.

Somewhere, deep down, Harry knew this was wrong. To simply select a specific common thing to then hate in order to keep people united was racist, and screamed of 'Mein Kampf'. However, that wouldn't be fair: it wasn't the Nazis who had first invented the idea of one race above the others. As far as Harry knew, the Romans did the same, and the Greeks held the slavery of an entire city in order for another to rise to glory as a common and normal thing. Morality was decided by the masses after all.

He blinked, before slightly starting a growling sound. A few seconds later the Bloody Baron hovered from behind him, holding a light smile on his lips.

"B...Bloody hell!" Ron exclaimed, going as pale as a paper sheet at the sight of the ghost of Slytherin hovering maybe a bit too close to him.

"Pathetical." The Baron muttered, shaking his head as the stare he gave the Weasley was more than enough for the others to understand to whom the ghost was talking to, "Afraid of me, child?"

The fact the ghost had asked that with a bit of contempt and a teasing tone didn't make it any better, as a flustered Ron suddenly stood up and ran away from the table...to die from embarrassment somewhere private probably.

"I hope you spend a happy holiday." The ghost whispered to Harry's ears, "And look forward to your Christmas gift."

Then, silently, the ghost disappeared into the floor. Barring theatrical entrances and a knack for possessing him without even telling him anything, the Bloody Baron was probably a good...no, he was clearly an arrogant guy. An outright vicious and diabolical...

"Can you stop this!?" Harry whined slowly, as the ghost of the Grey Lady popped up from behind him. Basileus was actually watching the scene with an amused look, before shaking his head and returning to sip his coffee. The other students were muttering things varying from 'possessed by demons' to 'troubled soul'.

"I do not know what you are speaking of, young Raven..." The Ravenclaw ghost commented, "Although it would please me if you kept your manners...my, children nowadays grow up so fast." There was a gentle teasing mockery in the ghost's voice, followed by her mimicking the wiping away of a tear before she slowly disappeared in a fine mist.

"So, Harry...I'm sure you've realized there is no potion class this morning." Basileus remarked with a bright smile, "Which means we can stay here comfortably and speak about how you managed to get out of our combined radars of notice...did your parents teach you the charm?"

Harry bit his lip, before shaking his head. For the following few minutes, Basileus asked questions with the bluntness of a sledgehammer, all the while the boy tried his best to answer with curt nods or shakes of the head. By the time the game of 'let's interrogate Harry' was finished, Basileus' brows were both furrowed and his mind was reeling in on what could have happened.

"...Good luck finding out what happened." He merely muttered, patting the boy's shoulder, "And...well, remember that sometimes, the easiest answer is probably the wrong one."

With that, the older boy stood up, soon followed by all the other Ravenclaws in Newt and Owl grade, and with a bellowing general fist pump, they departed to study.

"Mr. Dursley..." The severe voice of the potions' master reached him just as he stood up and was about to leave, and with it came the sting of being called a surname that was no longer his to begin with. "We will be going to the Headmaster Office immediately."

Nodding back in reply, Harry rushed to follow the quick walking of the Head of the Slytherin house.

"I am sorry, but please bear the surname for a while." The professor spoke in a low voice. "Headmaster Dumbledore will explain everything to you soon enough, but till then I hope you will keep an open mind on what you will now hear."

Harry looked at him, preferring to keep quiet and wait for the professor to start speaking as they walked their way upwards.

"On Halloween of eleven years ago You-Know-Who was defeated by the girl who lived, at Godric's Hollow, and disappeared." The raven haired man spoke slowly, "He found the home of the Girl-Who-Lived through the breaking of the Fidelius charm that was held by a man that is now serving his sentence in Azkaban...for life." The voice was curt and angry, "and upon entering he engaged into a fierce battle with the Potters. Instead of killing however, at first glance it appeared he had merely stunned them and left both there." Slowly, a statue of a Gargoyle came into view.

"And then, we reached last night...when something broke and you came out. Sugar Bombs." The professor said distractedly, as the statue moved to the side and allowed them entrance. Climbing a small flight of stairs, Harry found himself into a very wide office, with a perch upon which a flaming red bird was currently softly snoring.

The portraits around the room were silently watching the scene, as a small shelf filled with books stood in a corner. The Headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, had just popped in his mouth a strangely strong lemon scented candy, and was smiling at the two.

"Well...Severus, it appears that Mr. Potter here is perfectly fine...I would have suspected him to be slightly shocked, or...did you not tell him?"

"I didn't have the time, Headmaster." Severus replied quickly, as Harry merely looked from the Headmaster to the professor, and vice-versa.

"Well then...do sit, Mr. Potter." Once more, the Potter surname instead of the Dursley. What was going on?

"Yes...sir?" Harry squeaked, sitting down and nervously looking at his feet.

"I'm sure you have questions, don't you?" The Headmaster began with a small smile on his face, "Lemon drop?" He asked, gesturing towards a small bowl with round yellow spheres.

"No thanks sir." Harry quickly replied, clenching his hands against his knees.

"Now, no need to be afraid, Mr. Potter...you see," Albus sighed heavily, "I am sure you have one question, above all others, that you would like to have answered."

Harry looked at the old Headmaster for a moment, his appearance similar to that of Gandalf that it made the boy wonder where the hell he held his staff. Apparently his staring was making the old wizard smile, but still...

"My parents...they're alive." Harry began, "Why wasn't I..."

"Oh Harry," here Albus' tone became incredibly saddened, and Harry just knew the man was clearly feeling grief for him. "You must understand: Voldemort," the Headmaster stopped talking for a moment, looking at him with yet another grin before speaking once more, "Was a researcher of Dark Arts. He knew many powerful and vicious curses...for long I questioned the reason he would not outright kill the Potters, albeit he had them at his mercy...and it is only now that I can understand why he did so...Severus?"

The Potions' master briskly moved closer to Harry, getting down on one knee in order to be at the same eye level as Harry.

"He did not Obliviate them, nor did he kill you or your sister, because he placed you under a Fidelius charm."

"What?" Harry whispered back, raising both of his eyebrows in surprise.

"The Fidelius hides a secret within the soul of a person...on your person there were Multiple Fidelius cast, actually..." Snape murmured, "The secret of your existence, the secret of your parentage, the secret of your location and the secret on the survival of your parents."

"Then he cursed you so that nobody of wizard ability would notice you, except those he would reveal your existence to," Dumbledore spoke slowly, "and in the end, while we still don't know why he went through all that instead of killing you and your sister, or why he chose you particularly, or why he dropped you off at the Dursley."

"Wait. No. Voldemort left me with muggles? Didn't he want to kill them all? And...didn't Lillian kill him the first time!?"

"Voldemort was first and foremost an agent of chaos, Harry," Dumbledore replied quickly. "No doubt he wished for your existence to be kept secret until Hogwarts, or maybe even after...the castle picked you up as 'Harry Dursley', not 'Harry Potter'. Had it done so, we would have had this conversation far sooner." The headmaster turned to Severus immediately, who rolled his eyes before continuing.

"Then, while it is unknown to the general population," Severus replied slowly, "Voldemort went back to Godric's hollow and was then killed when his curse backfired against Lillian Potter, the Girl-Who-Lived...yes, you heard me right Harry: he went back and got killed then."

"But..."

"But before he did that," Snape murmured, "He told me about you...he wanted someone to take you in at Hogwarts, someone to mold you into the perfect Slytherin and then to use you against your very own family after having you grow bitter at how they had 'abandoned' you and the likes..."

"But Voldemort made a mistake." Albus smiled slowly, "He didn't know that his most trusty Death Eater was in fact a spy. A spy who told me of your existence...and now, I must apologize Harry."

"Wh...Why?" Harry understood far less than what they were explaining, and as his eyes settled confused on the Headmaster, he realized that the man's head was looking at the desk's surface rather than at him.

"We thought it was a trap." Dumbledore remarked, "We thought he was testing Severus, and that in truth he had merely gone in hiding."

I wouldn't have put such a convoluted plan out of his ability either, and so we decided to wait."

"Wait? But the Dursley...they took me in and...the ministry..."

"You must understand Harry that when we decided to wait, we hadn't expected other Death Eaters to enter the fray following the disappearance of the Dark Lord." Dumbledore mumbled curtly.

"And what we didn't expect...was for them to deliver themselves to the authority, pleading innocence and Imperius."

"Wh-What!? You captured all the magical Nazis!? Then why didn't you bring me back!"

"Because..." Severus spoke, "not a single Death Eater was sentenced to death, and the most prison time given to one of them was of ten years."

Harry kept quiet. He shook his head slowly, before looking at both Dumbledore and Severus.

"Tell me you're joking."

"I wish I was, Harry." Dumbledore whispered, "I truly wish I was...I wish I could tell you this is but a bad joke, but it isn't...the trials recognized the use of Imperius on all the Death Eaters, mind bending potion traces and worst. Because of those proofs...no judge would have given them the death sentence: they were victims too."

"That's bullshit!"

"Language, Harry!" Snape exclaimed at Harry, who simply looked downcast a second later.

"Now Severus, it's alright...I said far worst words when Fudge told me that." The bearded wizard sighed, before putting both his thumbs in wide circles around his forehead. "I'm sure you are a smart boy, Harry: do you realize why we didn't tell anyone else anything beforehand?"

"They...they would have come to get me?" The boy hazarded.

"Right. It was possible that Voldemort had a contingency plan in case of his disappearance or death, one that worked far too perfectly I dare to hazard saying...and if we had brought you back to your family, you wouldn't have been safe. Since you were not suffering abuses, and you appeared healthy enough, I left you with your muggle relatives in hope that by the time Voldemort would have struck to take you, we could have sprung a trap to capture him."

"Bait then? I was to be used as bait?" Harry asked incredulously.

"Indeed...the fact that your guardians left you around Christmas time is another sign of Voldemort's plan..." Dumbledore replied quickly. "He probably wants you bitter, angry, and left alone in an orphanage for at least this summer before sending someone to fetch you and offer you freedom."

"Wait a moment and let me understand all of this." Harry muttered, standing up and raising his hands to quickly recollect his thoughts. "Alright: Big bad Magical Hitler wanted to kill my sister, but before doing that he kidnaps me, hides me, and delivers me to the muggle relatives of my real mother. He uses magic, so no-one realizes that I actually exist. Magic Hitler wants Magic Himmler," pointing at Severus who looked quite bewildered at the words chosen, "To get me and turn me in a little magical Nazi in the first year of school, by sending me to an orphanage, making me feel lost and alone, and then offering me a place in Magical Nazi Germany. So, all I have to ask is actually..." And here Harry Potter actually screamed, "WHY THE HELL DID HE DO THAT!? Why did he do all of this, which I suppose took time, resources and a good amount of risk...for me!?"

Dumbledore didn't even flinch when Harry yelled, but Severus appeared on the point to take his wand out and hex...someone out of his lights.

"That, my dear Harry...is what I'd like to know too." Dumbledore explained. "And that is why I would like to ask you to help me discover what Voldemort is planning to do with you."

"You want me to go to Hitler!? Are you out of your mind!?" Harry yelled once more, "I'm eleven years old! Eleven! Why don't you get a James Bond or someone like him to do it!? No. I refuse. Not a chance in hell." And then he vigorously shook his head. What was the man thinking? What the hell! No. Bloody damn no!

"Are you sure? Because there might never be another chance like this one, Harry...many might die because you didn't help." The silver haired wizard whispered, but Harry, albeit more slowly, still shook his head. "Then I am sorry," Albus murmured, "I am truly sorry to do it, but you must understand that it's for your own good, that this conversation actually never happened...I hope you will forgive me, my boy, eventually...but this is for the greater good."

"Work makes men free, said the Auschwitz sign at the gate's entrance."

"Albus! You can't be serious!" Severus' head suddenly snapped towards the Headmaster, "You're..."

Harry hadn't been hearing the quick exchange between the two older wizards: he had gone for his wand. In truth, he hadn't really thought much about the rest but getting his wand and using it as an intimidating factor was all he could think of. He just wanted answers, not to play bait: especially not to play infiltrate in the magical Nazi encampment.

"Just remember my words, Harry...you are the son of James and Lily Potter, and your sister is Lillian Potter...Apologies." And then Dumbledore's wand was already in front of his eyes, so fast he hadn't even seen it coming.

Severus

"He...He..."

"Calm down Severus."

"CALM DOWN!?"

"Severus. Don't you dare yell at me!" The voice snapped back.

"He repeatedly Obliviated him! In front of me! He..." Snape mumbled, "He...he has to pay." The man muttered decisively. "I will make him pay."

"You will do no such thing, Severus." The voice ordered strongly, "You will let it be."

"But..."

"No. Voldemort will already be displeased upon hearing that the Fidelius charm and the Abscondere curse have both weakened to the point of being in tatters. He will realize he has been betrayed, if you give up on your position at Hogwarts to attack and die by the hands of Dumbledore."

"Give me some credit, would you?" Snape snorted back, slowly recomposing himself.

"What you have to do is make sure to keep to the side of the boy. Understood? I have no doubt Dumbledore plans to solve this problem by the end of the school year, but you must stall him in whatever ways you have available."

"You're not asking for daisies, you know?"

"I trust you Severus. The Prophecy was a gut punch, and you know it."

"I should have known better. I should have just..."

"Should have and did are different things, Severus. Don't dwell on the past: you can't change it past six hours...time turners be damned."

"I should probably go now."

"Yes, return to sulk near your cauldrons, Potion Master...I will go and do what I do best: plan."

"As if that helped us a lot last time." Severus whispered.

"As the muggle film I recently watched said: I find your lack of faith disturbing, Severus." And then, with a light chuckle, the voice disappeared.

Harry

The pounding headache apparently didn't want to go away. He had tried his best, but no matter what he did it still remained. He had

cried himself to sleep last night, and this morning he felt all the bitter stinginess that accompanied him. It was Christmas morning, and he was alone. He highly doubted he'd even receive a gift from someone, and...and he blinked.

Someone had actually made him a gift.

At the base of his bed, he had a veritable pile of gifts. He hadn't expected to receive any actually. In truth, he had half suspected nobody would have even bothered.

He began to gingerly open the first one, and relished upon seeing what appeared to be a box of chocolate frogs and multi-flavored jellybeans...all tastes plus one?

In any event, there was no signature, and so Harry merely jolted down to thank either the house elves or the portraits...or maybe even the ghosts. The next gift he opened was a small rotund cauldron, made of silver, with a note from his Potion's professor 'To apply oneself in order to avoid becoming a dunderhead in the future, practice is required'. The next gift he opened came from his head of the house, who had apparently bought him a small chain and a metallic band. 'Chain the wand, and Expelliarmus will be a problem of the past! Not to be used in Honor Duels' said the publicity attached. One more wrapping gave way to reveal 'The Prince', a gift from...Basileus?

He placed the book on the side, deciding to read it later on and concentrating more on the rest of the packages...just how many were there?

It took him a while to realize that many had a silver and green wrapping, and apparently they all were more 'token' gifts made up of things like sugar quills or chocolate frogs. All of them held the strangely same message 'Merry Christmas, King'...which kind of made him wonder why this 'King' fellow didn't simply send everything to him through the same package.

A few more books joined his pile, principally things like: 'Prepare for Owls since day one...of birth' and 'Let the Newts cometh: thy quill sharpen!' whom Harry had no trouble to place...but he did wonder when they had the time to get him gifts, or why they had actually given him something.

He was surprised to find a potted plant with a note from Neville, a mere 'Merry Christmas' and a 'Sorry' attached to it. The fact the plant was holding gentle purple leaves and a delicate white stem made him delicately place it near his bed desk. He'd question what the plant was later...maybe looming through the Herbology book afterwards. Draco too actually bought him a gift: a small wooden rod that had been neatly carved with etched symbols and stylized people. His note held a simply 'Found it in Knockturn alley, thought you'd like a historic piece. Merry Christmas.'

The last gift was a cage.

A cage in which a...a chicken was standing. The chicken was actually looking at him and ruffling its wings. Harry stared at the chicken for a moment, trying to understand just why a chicken had been gifted to him, until it finally dawned into his brain that yes, someone had said something about giving him a pet because of...of something.

The pet was a chicken apparently.

It hooted then.

"No." Harry muttered, shaking his head in disbelief. "You did not hoot."

"Hoot!" The...chicken, was actually a...an owl?

"You are not an owl."

"Hoot!" The owl replied with an angry glare.

"You're a chicken!"

"HOOT!" It hooted angrily, actually looking quite menacing.

"Oh no. You won't convince me otherwise!" Harry deadpanned, only for the thing to angrily hoot again, before using its beak to start hitting the lock of the cage.

"Alright, alright! You're an owl, happy now?"

"Hoot." There was a sort of air of finality as the chick...owl, hooted that last hoot.

"What should I name you?" Harry asked the 'owl', looking over its features: it was a really fat owl, with bright white and light brown feathers. It also held a light scale-like protuberance on the head, as well as a slightly prolonged back...

It was a chicken no matter which sides the 'owl' decided to take, but Harry didn't want to be fighting with a pet about semantics, of all things...for what he knew, owls and chickens were the same thing: birds.

"Birdie?"

"HOOOT!" The indignant screech made Harry yelp.

"Sorry!" He mumbled, holding the side of his head as the headache came back full-force.

"Hoot...Hootus?"

The Owl looked at the boy while moving his head to the side, raising one of its bright eyes in a sort of way to say 'really?'

"Alright...Hoto...Nothing with H, fine..." Harry sulked, shaking his head slowly while massaging his temples.

"Barnabus?"

"Weathery?"

"Feathery?"

"Chic...ehi! Alright. Stop the stare, please!"

Taking a deep sigh, Harry looked around his room, before his gaze finally settled on The Prince.

"Niccolo?"

The owl hooted softly, moving its right wing in a 'sort of' way.

"Machiavelli!"

The owl actually closed both of its eyes happily, nodding.

"Well then, Machiavelli...I'm opening the cage, alright?" Mentally, Harry was sincerely hoping it wouldn't attack him outright.

It turned out the chicken-owl did not, in fact, attack.

It simply hovered and perched itself on top of Harry's right shoulder, demonstrating that it could indeed fly. Which defied all laws of physics, but just like the Bumblebee, the bird probably ignored the laws of flight and flew nevertheless...and there was magic around, so really, why was he still questioning if a half chicken half owl could fly?

The gifts had all been unpacked, and just at the bottom of it, there was a small bundled cloak. It was made of black velvet, apparently stitched together with a bronze lining. On the back the symbol etched was the Hogwarts symbol, but it was missing the division of the four houses, holding only the H emblazoned in a cursive way.

It also had a hood, and putting it on over his pajamas, Harry hardly repressed a smile.

Machiavelli merely flew to perch on his bed's frame, eying the thing critically. Beneath the bundle, instead, was a key.

The key was old, rusty and had once been golden probably. Harry raised an eyebrow, perplexed at the sight. He gently grabbed it, trying to see if there was something of important on it, but except for an etched 'S.S' nothing else stood of importance.

It was then that he realized that the cloak had disappeared. He was in his pajamas. The cloak wasn't there.

"Wh..." He flexed his arms, actually realizing that the cloak was there, but...invisible.

It was an invisible cloak...

"Cool." Harry's whisper came at the same time as he realized, with a sad gleam, that his parents hadn't given him any gift.

No gifts for freaks after all.

Of course...

He'd never see them again, would he?

As Harry removed his cloak, which returned visible, and got dressed, Machiavelli ended up once more landed on his shoulder. Like a parrot of a pirate captain.

"So...you're a third parrot, a third chicken and a third owl?" Harry asked, but this time, looking at the feral glare of Machiavelli, he realized he had let his tongue loose too soon: there was no cage now.

The startles yelps of Harry Potter echoed through the Ravenclaw's common room, as the boy literally ran through the papers being followed by a positively murderous half-breed...no, one-third-breed.

"And there goes yet another resident of Ravenclaw with a murderous-intent pet!" Harry heard a voice exclaim, just as the Rooster indignantly began to cry and the smaller owl suddenly fell from the sky to restart their battle.

All in all...it was a normal Christmas morning in Ravenclaw. It was even snowing outside. Everything was perfectly fine under the white, gentle snow.

Author's notes

Remember that what Dumbledore and Snape say and what really has happened might be different. I dig none of that 'the characters always say the truth' thing.

As for Harry not entering Emo-mode during Christmas morning, do remember he has suffered from good enough amounts of Obliviate that you will realize, in the following chapters, just what long-lasting consequences the 'greater good' can have on a poor child's psyche.

And I personally pride myself in the last lines of this chapter. Everything appears so normal...

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 20

The winter vacation ended with little to no glory, and when the New Year came around, Harry was no longer happy to begin with. Sometimes, he would just blink himself awake after having stared at a portrait for long enough to make the portrait itself worry about him, and other times he had come to terms with Machiavelli's abilities to escape captivity whether someone liked it or not.

Argus had offered his pity to Harry, as well as hand delivering to him a pair of stiff wool gloves for the cold weather. He had seen no need to wrap up the gift, and considering Harry had 'gifted' to him in turn cleaning products, they both were on good terms. Soon, the lessons would start again.

He was currently using his wool gloves to their best, by making snow puppets on Hogwarts' ground, when he heard a strange crackling sound and a bellowing high yelp coming from Hagrid's hut, before the door suddenly lurched open and Fang dashed out of it. The giant dog was apparently running for his dear life, the back of his tail burning slightly as it dashed through the snow.

"Fang! Come back 'ere!" Hagrid exclaimed, moving out of his hut with half his body singed and his flesh badly burnt. The fact he was actually smiling and acting as if he just wasn't suffering from third degrees burns meant nothing, of course.

Harry's hand had already gone to hold the handle of his wand that was held attached to the small chain that ended up with the metal band at his wrist. The cloak was invisible, and would not hide his body, or the clothes he wore beneath, but apparently, it was able to hide wands.

He should have asked the Grey Lady how the thing worked, but he had yet to meet her again. Even the portrait in the common room had been empty for days now. The Bloody Baron was nowhere to be found, and even the other ghosts had gone missing from his sights.

Nobody had cared of course; nobody except him. Still, the fact that the half-charred giant was suddenly looking at him, smiling and gesturing him closer, made Harry gulp down in nervousness. What had the man been doing that it nearly burned him alive?

"Harry! Been a whil'!" The half-giant beamed, "Had a good Christmas!?"

"Yeah." Harry smiled back at the giant, "What happened?" He asked a few seconds later, "You alright?"

"Nothin's wrong!" The giant quickly, maybe too quickly, replied while shaking his head and hands. "Everything's fine!"

Just then, a light screech came from behind the giant, forcing Hagrid's eyes to widen almost comically as he exited and closed the door behind him. Harry heard a light roar, as well as seeing from the cracks of the hut's door smoke filtering out.

"Dragon?" Harry asked curiously. He knew it sounded stupid, since after all there was no way it could have been a dragon, but he had grown up with dungeons and dragons too, and if something roared and made fire...well, to him it was either a dragon or...a dragon.

"Harry!" Hagrid exclaimed, "Please don't tell anyone." The man implored, "I'm takin' care of it since it had nowhere to go and..."

"I...Hagrid: it's a dragon." Harry hissed back. "You can't keep a dragon in a wooden hut!" In truth, Harry was surprised the thing hadn't been on fire. "Look at you! You can't hide burns like those around! And you need to be checked by Madam Pomfrey!"

"But Norbert has nowhere to go! They'd kill him if they found him out..." Hagrid mumbled, only for Harry to take a sharp breath in, as he heard the claws of the dragon tear against the wooden door. Just how the hell was a dragon of all things staying inside the wooden hut without burning it down? Of course...Harry rolled his eyes as he remembered that 'magic' was indeed the answer to that question.

"Hagrid: do you want to die?" He asked, "I don't know much about dragons, but even the muggles know the story of how vicious and evil they can be!"

"He's a softie! I swear! He thinks I'm his mama!"

"Hagrid. Listen to me." Harry muttered, "Dragons should be free. Not kept in captivity." Possibly, dragons shouldn't even be near schools,

children or anyone else who didn't have armor plus five and a ring of fire resistance, and probably coupled with a Vorpal sword.

"If you really love him, you should let him go." He added hopeful that a teary sit-com line would work on the half-giant. The fact the man's shoulders were actually trembling...oh that couldn't really be all it took to make the man change his mind! The giant took out a handkerchief and blew his own nose, tears pooling out as it nodded slowly.

"You'r right ya know? Yer really smart and all...that's a raven for ya I s'ppose...but where should I let him go? The forest's not a good place...unicorns are dying an' all..."

"Ehm...why not ask Dumbledore?" Harry hazarded, "He's the Headmaster...of course he's the one you should go to if you have any troubles! And he's really kind!" The boy scrunched his face a second later. Why Dumbledore? Why not professor Flitwick, or professor Snape? Why not the professor for the Care of Magical Creatures actually? Well...it wasn't important.

"Of course Dumbledore's kind! Ya know he gave me a job and a place to stay? Well I s'ppose I could go and talk to him, b..."

And then the hut's window cracked open, and a small black winged lizard flew out of it.

"Norbert!" Hagrid yelled, opening the door and entering the hut, to emerge a few minutes later with a pink umbrella. "Come back her'!" The giant began to give chase, his pink umbrella quite comically held in front of him. Harry blinked, before taking a deep breath and turning to leave.

He had done his job: he wasn't going on a dragon hunt and he definitively wasn't going to risk his neck for that. His eyes travelled to the snowy grounds and then towards the lake: he'd head there for the moment. Somewhere his subconscious was probably telling him that being close to frozen water with a dragon flying around was a good and smart thing to do, and thus he trotted in that direction, looking for stones to throw at the thin ice sheet that rested floating atop the water's surface.

He was giggling like a mad man a few seconds later, as he grabbed a really big stone and flung it in the lake.

"Opsie daisy!" He brightly chuckled, before deciding that there was a pretty looking flower nearby...completely frozen stiff. He blinked, looking at his surroundings once more. He had apparently entered the Forbidden Forest, if the amount of trees near him was of any indication.

"Watson?" He asked, "Watson, where are you?"

Who was Watson to begin with?

A ghost maybe? Had he followed a ghost till there? Why would he follow a ghost named Watson into the Forbidden Forest? As he turned around, trying to find any point that could lead him out, he came face to face with Professor Quirrell, who was eying him curiously.

"Mr. Dursley?" The man asked, slowly. "What are you doing here?"

"Professor! I...I lost Watson!" He babbled, gesticulating, "And...And Watson's important!"

"Now Mr. Dursley, is Watson your pet?" Quirrell murmured, "While I understand your intention of looking for him, why did you not call a faculty member? The Groundskeeper would have probably fared better than you in finding him out."

"Watson's not my pet!" Harry exclaimed hotly, "He's my friend!"

"You mean there's another student in the forest, possibly lost?" Quirrell's eyes narrowed, as he took out his wand a second later. "The Forbidden Forest is a really dangerous place to get lost into, Mr. Dursley...please do follow me out."

"But Watson..."

"He will be fine Mr. Dursley..." The muggle studies professor muttered, before adding, "Can you remember how you two got separated?"

"Ehm..." Harry frowned, bringing his right hand on his temple to massage it, trying to remember. "No."

"I see..." The man then looked at him with a strange gleam. Why was he eying him like that?

"Can you describe Mr. Watson then?" The professor suggested to him, and as Harry vividly nodded he soon stopped. Could he really describe Mr. Watson?

"He...Well...He's got..." Harry shook his head. "Who's Watson?" He finally asked, as the professor was looking at him a bit strangely, actually.

"No-one Mr. Dursley, unless you're referring to Sherlock Holmes side-kick, the character written by Arthur Conan Doyle..."

"Oh! Why are we talking about Sherlock Holmes?"

"To make conversation...would you kindly stay next to me, Mr. Dursley? I'd rather not lose you in the forest." The man commented, grabbing a hold of him by the arm. "Your head of the house will of course come to know of this."

"What? Why!?" Harry exclaimed. He had done nothing wrong, nothing!

"Because..."

Harry was looking at the curtains of his bed.

They were a nice and bright blue and bronze color. It was really shiny too. He liked shiny things.

He closed his eyes shut for a moment. Something was completely wrong. He had been walking around, he had met Hagrid, seen the dragon and then he had gone over to the lake. Why had he ended up later on in the Forbidden Forest? Who the hell had brought him there!?

Watson. He only knew that name...but who or what was Watson?

He was in his pajamas, but resting on his chest was a small bundled weight. He blinked, and after touching it for a while realized it had to be some small stone of sorts. His shoulders sagged in relief when at the light of the moon it came out as a Bezoar. So he had gotten a bezoar once more?

Just where did he get it though, and why? Well, the why was obvious: to avoid poisoning. A better question would actually be what he was going to do with it.

He didn't feel sick or poisoned, but he did feel kind of tired. Had he done some heavy working recently?

It was warmer now, and as his eyes closed he kind of wondered just when the lessons would start again...he was getting bored with nothing to do around the castle.

His muscles began to spasm as he sat down while gritting his teeth at the Ravenclaw table, the next morning. There were four tables once more in the dining hall and every student stood at his own table happily chatting to one another. A few blinks came his way from the Slytherin table...maybe they had dust floating around?

He shook his head slowly, before looking towards the Headmaster, who had apparently stood up.

"With the end of the last term, and the start of the new one, I hope you will all have new purposes and objectives at hand. More important, however, is to remember to be united against harm, and to always, always remember what is really important in life."

"You must remember: you are the son of James and Lily Potter, and Lillian Potter is your sister. Apologies." He blinked. His eyes zeroing on the woman next to the headmaster, bright red hair and green eyes, scanning the crowd...then they moved to yet another man, with dark hair and a pair of glasses, doing pretty much the same with a bright smile on his face. Both were looking at the Gryffindor table, where Lillian was currently talking happily with Hermione and Ron.

"Hogwarts is a school where bonds of friendship are formed, and where we help one another to grow to new heights." The old

headmaster continued. "It is a place where trust is place from your parents, to provide for a safe and nurturing environment."

"Hogwarts nurture her children so much, it suffocates them with pillows."

"Professor Quirrell will be indisposed for the remainder of the academic year." The silver haired man added, "But a replacement has already been found."

Somehow, Harry found himself not caring much. He had never met Professor Quirrell, had he?

"Poor sod. 'Indisposed' is another way to put 'mauled to near death'." A voice muttered near him, making him turn and stare at Draco. What was he doing at the Ravenclaw's dining table? He blinked for a moment, before realizing they were actually walking alongside the corridors together.

"Anyway, we got the Switzerland." Draco commented. "It's...strange." The Slytherin boy whispered. "I mean, Vincent was being pranked by the Weasleys yesterday, and Abbott, the Hufflepuff girl you know? Well, she punched Fred or George in the shin, never been able to recognize who is who, and then got a Ravenclaw prefect, Clearwater I think, to take points from the twins...it's the first time the Weasleys actually got caught doing a prank..."

"They...Listen Draco," Harry began, now visibly scared, "There's some..."

"Thing going wrong." He finished, blinking at the sight of a wooden door.

"What the hell is going on!?" He yelled, looking around the room. It was a simple room, with dust and chairs and no windows. Yet the light came in from someplace, and when he narrowed his eyes, he finally recognized what the light was. It was the refraction of a ghost, standing in a corner of the room. Peeves was standing there, floating and eerily silent. His eyes glazing over him but not actually looking...he did seem kind of petrified on the spot.

"Finally we cornered the bugger." Another voice loomed behind him, making him turn around and look at the ghostly forms of Helena Ravenclaw and Henry Slytherin. In the back, he barely saw the tip of what seemed a tail disappear within a hole in the wall, that slowly closed itself as if it had never been there.

"I...I...What's going on!?" Harry exclaimed, only to crumple on the floor and hold his robes tightly. It was just as if by letting them go he'd forget again and end up somewhere else.

Henry looked at Helena, who in turn was wearing a contrite and sad face, before shaking her head.

"Harry, look at me." The Grey Lady whispered, "Please?" It was probably the pleading tone that convinced him to look up, instead of at the ground.

"I...I don't want to forget or end up somewhere else and..."

"Harry, calm down." The ghost murmured gently, "You were hurting a lot, but now it's over."

"What is over? Why can't someone just tell me what's going on!?" Harry hissed, only for Henry to float forward, pushing gently aside Helena.

"Your mind was breaking up, child." The tone was severe and stern, and Harry was on the verge of whimpering only for having heard it, "So shut up and be a man. Let Helena finish will you?" More than a question, however, it was a statement.

"Yes...Well Henry, now that you managed to scare him out of his wits, you can return to the corner, alright?"

"Hel...alright." The Bloody Baron's head appeared downcast, as the ghost floated near the corner.

"Now, Young Raven..." Helena whispered, "You should feel a strange pressure around your neck, is that right?" At the question, the boy looked down and touched for a bit, before his fingers wrapped against a strange silk-like surface before touching his clothes.

"I never got around to explain what the Invisible cloak did, right?" The ghost smiled slowly, as Harry took out from within the cloak a small pocket watch.

"That, my dear boy, is Salazar Slytherin's watch of misdirection." Helena pointed out, "My mother gave it to me when I was eleven years old, but now I'm giving it to you because you will need it, and also because we finally found it."

"I told you that Salazar was a devious man." The Bloody Baron piped in from his corner. "Only he would have had Peeves, of all people, hide something."

"Anyway," Helena rolled her eyes, "Salazar knew the powers and the effects of some of the worst curses imaginable, but if there was one thing he feared, it was to lose his knowledge and his cunning." The ghost added quietly, "The watch's small arm will turn to where a spell is being cast, while the longer one will turn to where the spell will end up hitting...but the watch only protects against a single, specific, type of spell."

"So no blazing through battle spells, boy! You'd end up shred..." Helena's death glare on the baron made the man whimper in a corner.

"AS I was saying...it redirects Oblivates and Legilimency, and fools the wizards who cast the spell not by simply failing, no...it gives them the general impression that all is well and nothing is wrong."

Harry looked at the ghost, while clutching the pocket-watch that was held by a small golden chain around his neck, "Oblivates? Leg...Legilimency?" The boy asked, worry in his voice.

"Indeed my child." Helena nodded, "Oblivate is a spell that tears apart a man's mind to destroy thoughts, remove memories and generally leaves the target shaken and suffering from mild headaches...when repeatedly used over a small period of time, it can lead to long lasting effects like mood swings, local amnesia, short term memory loss and more..."

"What day is it?" Harry asked, suddenly scared and trembling.

"We're at the Ninth of February, Harry..." Helena whispered sadly, "You were in and out of your mind for a few months."

"..." The boy did not speak. He just shook his head slowly, before looking at both of the ghosts. "Why did nobody notice? Why didn't you notice?"

"If we had done nothing," the Baron began slowly, "Your mind would have fragmented even more. Dumbledore may be a powerful wizard, but with the work he did it would have been luck for you if you turned mad at age fifteen...so we had to do something quickly."

"We took turns in possessing you, Harry: that's why you don't remember seeing any of us, or what happened during these few months. We completely possessed you." She added, "not the mere hovering behind and influencing thoughts...we normally can't do that to students, it's in the rules of the castle..."

"Except when it's to help said students." The Baron remarked, "And in your case, we were helping you remain sane...You lost two months of life, Harry..." The ghost whispered, "And there is no excuse for something like that, but...we managed to get everything back in order at least."

"Back in order?" Harry mumbled, eying both ghosts curiously.

"Indeed." Henry nodded, "None of the ghosts or portraits will willingly report anything to Dumbledore now. Not after what he did to you...Peeves, who was the wildcard...well...let's just say we had 'Watson' take care of him." The man smiled.

Harry turned once more, looking at Peeves paralyzed face. The poltergeist was outright frozen.

"Watson? Who's..."

"That's for another time, child." Helena piped in, "In any event, we managed to safeguard what we could...you will have to catch up unfortunately, but as long as you keep the invisible cloak on nobody will realize anything."

"Why? What is there to realize?" Harry asked, curious.

"The cloak does not hide the person, but hides all that is a trinket on it." Helena remarked, "And it hides it from everything and anything. May it be location spells, eyes, scrutiny, or even patting: except with the will of the owner, the cloak will not remove itself...and so anything within its pockets."

Harry frowned, looking at his clothes where of course he could not see the cloak. He hadn't expected it to be that magical...he had just thought it was something cool to hide the wand. Like with Flitwick's wand chain.

"My mother used to lose a lot of stuff, and was increasingly paranoid," the Grey Lady added, "She made the cloak so that at least she could keep the really important things somewhere where...never mind."

"Someone used those 'Obliviate' spells on me, right?" Harry asked quietly. "And this...mind reading too, yes?"

"Yes." And with that, Harry took a deep breath. Magic could also make someone read your mind. Magic could erase memories, and change them, and...and it was bad.

"Who did it?" He asked, hesitantly...and then he stilled, "No." He whimpered, "No...No, no."

"Young Raven..." Helena began.

"The Headmaster did this?" Harry muttered, "The Headmaster? The guy who defeated the magical Nazi? Who defeated Grindelwald? He did this to me...why?"

"That is a good question." The Bloody Baron remarked, "But unluckily one we cannot answer." It added, "The portraits in the Headmaster's office belong to the previous Headmasters, and they, differently from those in the hallways, are bound to obey his will."

"So what? The Headmaster wants to make me mad?" Harry whimpered, "I'm alone. My family disowned me, my real family apparently has better things to do than even consider I exist, and...and..."

"Young Raven!" Helena snapped, "We had this conversation once! You are not alone!"

"But..."

"Oh Helena, let me if you please..." Henry remarked drily, floating closer to the boy and grabbing a hold of the ghostly sword at his side. "Now Young Raven...let me ask you: is Mr. Malfoy your friend?"

Harry blinked, but the ghost kept on talking. "What about Filch? Or Binns? What about the Navigator or Don Chisciotte? What about Machiavelli and the other Ravenclaws? What about the ghosts? You see boy...your family left you, alright. It's sad. It's bad. It's horrible...but whimpering and crying? That will not give it back to you. I told you once, and I will tell you again! What do you need to have power!?"

"...Ha...Hatred?" Harry whispered. As Helena instead was now trying to interrupt the baron.

"Yes!"

"N..."

"Oh shut up Helena!" The ghost snapped, before addressing once more Harry, "You know why you were abandoned? Your guardians called you a freak, right?"

"Yes..." Harry gulped down nervously, as the baron instead retorted quickly.

"THEN SHOW THEM FEAR." The ghost roared, brandishing his sword, "Show them that it is not 'a freak' they should have called you, but a 'monster'! Show them to fear you, to respect you! Show them what a Wizard is! What a Warlock is! Show them what magic's true power is...and show the whole world. Show them all...Prove to me, Harry, prove to me that you are neither a Dursley nor a Potter, but your own person...prove to me, that you are my worthy descendant!"

"Wh-What?" Harry exclaimed, clenching his fists and recoiling slightly in order to avoid the ghostly sword's swishing in the air by the hand of the Bloody Baron.

"History is made of one percent facts and ninety-nine percent poetical additions," the Baron remarked drily, "I certainly did not kill Helena here because of a bout of anger...I killed her because she lied to me and hid my child, our child, away from me!"

"It's too soon Henry!" Helena snapped, "Too..."

"Wh..."

"He did grow up well in Albania...then the line moved on to France, where it became D'Orsay..." The Ghost commented, "Later on, it entered England, and it became..."

"Not another word Henry, not another word!" Helena hissed, "That's enough! Harry, get out of here and go to lesson! You have Transfiguration now! Move it!"

With a startled yelp, Harry ran. The corridors of the school met him with little to no problems, as the classes hadn't probably changed. What changed was that as he sat down in the back row, looking with a bit of relief at the people entering in one after the other, his mind was assaulted with all the thoughts of just what he had learned.

The Headmaster wanted him...dead? The...school staff was on his pay roll, wasn't it? With magic flourishing and everything else...was there really someone he could trust? The seat next to him was suddenly taken by Hermione, while on the other side of him Ron Weasley apparently sat. In front of him he realized much to his dismay that his sister had taken the seat. Practically, he had been 'bunked' in.

That didn't bode well at all, especially considering how when Draco and the other Slytherin entered, their hands made the subtle gesture to get to their wands, but stopped midway. Harry's gaze was kind of shocked and surprised at such a display, but when the rest of the seats were filled, it was with the most bizarre checkered formation ever. On one side, all Gryffindors and him, while on the other the rest of the other houses...there were a few unlucky Hufflepuffs in the Gryffindor side, but they stood in a corner, making as much space as possible between them and the Gryffindors.

"Harry." Hermione curtly greeted him, before taking out her transfiguration stuff.

Harry blinked. Now that he didn't have to worry about blacking out, the question still remained on what the hell was going on. What did those ghosts do to him? What did they make him do? As he took out his stuff, and prepared himself for taking notes, Ron's elbow just so casually pushed his ink well down, making it fall on the ground and crash.

"Sorry mate! Wasn't looking!" Ron spoke with a smirk, before said damn elbow, as the red haired boy opened his book, hit him in the sides making him wince.

"Sorry!" The boy muttered a moment later, but Harry could have sworn 'You bastard git' had been added to that.

"Ron!" Lillian exclaimed, having turned her head, "Tell me again: how were your holidays back at home?" Was the girl taunting him, now? Did she know about his guardians leaving him? Did they...oh, of course. The Potters probably didn't have the money to take him in. They didn't have it at first, it was no surprise they didn't possess it at the time. So that was why he had become a ward of the ministry: in the end his father's brother had...

Harry blinked.

Lillian was his sister, not his cousin. It was his father who hadn't wanted to bring him in.

He had been left to the Dursleys, and...Petunia had told him they hadn't expected him to become a wizard. Was that the reason? They had thought him a squib and abandoned him to the muggle relatives? And even then, even in that moment, they didn't want him back?

So Lillian wasn't taunting him because he spent the holidays at Hogwarts. He was driving the nails deeper into his wounds because he didn't have a home to return to. He would never have one. Thinking like that, he completely missed Ron's remark, or the fact that Lillian was apparently entering a great length of words on how her mother and her father had filled her with gifts.

It was February: why the hell were they still talking about Christmas? He took a deep breath, as from his school bag he grabbed one of his spare pens. Sure, they had said they had to bring quills...but

there was no rule against writing with pens, was there?

Writing on a parchment was difficult, but with McGonagall explaining both Ron and Lillian turned silent, scribbling notes. His eyes moved to what Hermione was writing, and was particularly surprised when it turned out the girl wasn't writing, but had her wand out beneath her desk, and pointed at him.

She saw him looking at her, and at the wand, and bit her lip.

His eyes probably betrayed his shock at the matter, because Hermione suddenly whispered.

"What do you know about Nicholas Flamel?"

"Wh..."

"Not another word." Hermione hissed slowly and in a low voice. "Tell me what you know, and I won't jinx you...even if you do deserve it."

"Yeah mate, I'd listen to her." Ron muttered with his own wand out beneath the desk...and it was then that Harry realized he had been bunked in...and ambushed. Just what had those two ghosts done by possessing him!? Why were they actually holding him at wand-point, by now, and why was the professor not actually seeing what was happening.

"Nicholas Flamel..." Harry muttered, wracking his brain to try and remember what the hell this guy was. He had heard about him...he was in one of his books on warfare, wasn't it?

"I don't know."

"Bullshit." Ron hissed at him, jabbing the tip of his wand into his side. "You overheard us yesterday and taunted us on it. Now out with it."

"What is the worst you can do, Weasley?" Harry queried, his eyes locking on those of the red haired ginger. "Because, last I checked, I killed a troll. Would a ginger give me more trouble I wonder?"

The nerves of this...this baby who thought that pointing a wand at him would work. A wand was more than a gun, and he'd debase it

by simply using it as such. He didn't know the spells Harry knew. The brat could end up skewered in at least two different ways, and yet here he was, probably menacing him with a jinx.

"You wouldn't want to walk naked out of here, would you?" Hermione whispered quickly, seeing how Ron was at a loss of words.

"Or with a runny nose or maybe with both." The girl added, but she was no longer 'menacing'.

He was Harry, the troll killer. Really did these pitiful kids expect him to bow to their tantrums and outrageous demands?

"Why don't you go and eat a frog, Mudblood?" Harry whispered with a bright smile on his face. "That would teach you to..."

"Mucus ad Nauseam!" Ron's spell was cast outright in the middle of the class, hitting him full-front and sending him on the ground. The shrill shriek of McGonagall came immediately.

"Weasley! What do you think you're doing cursing a fellow student in the middle of the class!? Twenty-five points from Gryffindor!" At the vocal disagreement that soon followed, Harry didn't manage to hear much else in the middle of it, because someone had firmly grabbed him and had begun to bring him out towards the infirmary.

"That was pure genius." The voice belonged to Draco, but Harry heard little to nothing. Was there mucus coming out also from his ears? Or was it the ringing from the curse's hit?

"Now the Gryffindors will have a hard time saying they aren't bullies. And did you hear Weasley's excuse? You calling Granger a mudblood? Nobody will ever believe that: you're muggle-raised." Draco was still talking, when the infirmary came into view.

Harry could have sworn, as Draco left him on the bed of the infirmary, that the boy had mumbled something.

It was either 'isn't this the third time you're in the infirmary?' or 'I'll call the nurse', but certainly, whatever it was, it did kind of made him feel better.

He had a friend after all.

And now, he also knew who his enemies were.

Madam Pomfrey took less than a few minutes to get the small jinx out of his system, and once she did, he merely laid down on the infirmary's bed to get a few minutes of rest. It was then, that he saw another friendly face come in from the door.

Basileus was tapping on his Prefect's badge as he moved to sit on the chair next to Harry's bed.

"Well, now that you will have to explain to me. Why would you do that, Harry?"

"Do what?" The boy whispered, looking at the man with both of his eyebrows rising up in surprise.

"I was called to ask what your version of the story is concerning the event. I doubt you would call Miss. Granger a Mudblood without cause, if actually calling her that. That does however bring us to what you did to have Mr. Weasley actually send a spell your way, unless...are the Gryffindors bullying you?" The voice was clear, but the question came with an icy underlying tone that was surprisingly scary for the meek but light hearted teen.

"N-No sir." Harry squeaked, shaking his head.

"Good. You know of the term 'a murder of crows', Harry? We take bullying very seriously, and we strike back with viciousness...so, what happened?"

"I...I don't know." Harry whispered, his eyes downcast, "Suddenly they surrounded me on all sides, and...and they acted all mean and all with me. They took their wands out from under the desk and wanted to know who Nicholas Flamel was and when I said I didn't know they said I was lying...and then I told Hermione to go and eat a frog, but Ron attacked me then and so..."

"I understand." Basileus remarked, his mind thoughtful, "and you actually did give them a good suggestion...Nicholas Flamel is on a chocolate frog card after all." The teen commented with a light chuckle. "He's the creator of the philosopher's stone, and is at least a hundred and more years old...they didn't tell you why they were

asking about it?" The prefect's voice was now tinged with curiosity, before something passed over the man's eyes. "Oh...It could have something to do with the forbidden corridor I suppose."

"Eh?"

"Nothing for a Raven as young as you to look into, kid." Basileus remarked, "In fact I'll bring up the possibility of idiocy being genetical in the Gryffindors, next time around..." The teen ruffled the boy's hair, and for just a second, Harry winced slightly as the red haired boy quickly removed his hand. He stood up quickly, briskly walking out of there with a simple goodbye.

Left alone, except with the distinct feeling he wasn't actually alone, he stretched slightly on the bed. He'd need to sleep everything off...hoping he wouldn't suddenly awaken somewhere else, with someone else, doing something else.

Hermione

"Why did you do that, Ron? I had everything under control!" The girl hissed at the red haired boy, who was currently eating dinner without a care in the world.

"He called you that!" Ron exclaimed, with his mouth half full.

"And because of that not only did we lose points, but you got kicked out of transfiguration! Something even the twins didn't manage!" Lillian muttered. "I thought it was clear we just had to warm him up a bit, and then ask him about Nicholas! Why did you have your wand out to begin with?"

"Well, Hermione had hers out!" Ron replied, looking at the bushy haired girl who flinched slightly.

"Because last time I spoke with him, it was clear he just wanted to be left alone. I thought he'd answer if I promised not to hurt him, and you, instead, had to rile him up!" Hermione hotly exclaimed.

"I riled him up? You held him at wand point first!" The Weasley's exclamation was met with the silence of the dining hall. Turning sharply around, everyone's gaze was apparently held on the boy, Harry, who had just then arrived from the door of the common room

and was heading towards the Ravenclaw's table together with a couple of Ravens from the older years.

"Look at him. Like he's some sort of noble prat..." Ron hissed.

"My-My," Nearly Headless Nick commented, appearing right over Ron. "I didn't want to believe it was true. Resorting to violence and to menaces? Gryffindors? You truly bring dishonor to the house." And with those harsh words, Nearly Headless Nick flew away, straight through the walls without even waiting to hear a reply.

Yet Hermione couldn't shake out the feeling that something was apparently wrong now. Gryffindors were quietly eating, and even the Weasley twins weren't much active. Slytherin, Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff students instead were happily chatting among themselves of this and that...

Something was wrong. Now, if only she could understand what it was...and who Nicholas Flamel was...

Her hand grabbed one of the chocolate frogs that had been set at the table as a desert, munching onto it distractedly as she removed the card. Dumbledore's card was one of the most common, with the back speaking of how he was a really powerful wizard, a leader, a friend with...

Eat a toad.

"I found Flamel." Hermione whispered.

"Huh?" Lillian replied curiously.

"Look..." and with that, the card was passed to Lillian, and later on to Ron.

As the trio began to talk and decide on what to do, a pair of bright green eyes looked at the tables, and a small sigh escaped the person's lips.

Life was never simple, was it?

Author's notes

I think it's best if I outright explain the 'biased' POV, before someone misunderstands.

As you may have noticed, Lillian spoke of her time at home, thinking rightfully so that Harry had gone home too for Christmas. Because no-one knows that his guardians left Harry, then she doesn't know about it. She had planned on warming up to him, but what 'she' didn't know was that Ron instead had been 'harassing' Harry by elbowing him.

When warming up didn't work, Hermione tried the second route of wand point.

However to Harry this further on demonstrated how the three were working together to gank on him.

Hope there won't be any misunderstandings further on the line...

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 21

"Fodio!" The wooden mannequin's chest splintered, as small needle-like holes appeared. "Ico!" The needle-wide holes splintered even more, as if something had just once more pierced through them, but the amount of saw dust that escaped the small hole was far bigger.

"What is the difference then?" The voice asked, belonging to the Bloody Baron who was hovering behind Harry.

"They both mean Pierce, coming from the Latin tongue...but one has the subtle meaning of 'stab' and the other has it of 'wound'. So one stops after hitting, and the other instead makes sure the target bleeds before stopping." Harry replied quickly, setting his glasses back on his face as the mannequin repaired itself. The room of requirement was currently filled with mannequins, all of which appeared to have suffered somehow from some type of mortal wound of sorts. Some of those were still charred actually, and a few spontaneously combusted after Harry's last words.

"Good." The Bloody Baron remarked. "Now, why do people no longer learn these spells?"

"Because they're intended for war: the public or private usage of one of such spells on any wizard is to be met with the immediate departure to Azkaban. They are not Unforgivables, but they...they're made to kill."

"Precisely. Teaching kids flashy things like Expelliarmus or that bratty curse of Mucus ad Nauseam is worthless on a battlefield, true magic is used to do wonderful or horrendous things...not to flash colored lights at one another." The Baron pointed at his ghostly chest, "Mors in magicae et magia in morte...Death in magic and magic in death. There is no battle won by removing an enemy's wand: only by removing an enemy's heart does the enemy stop moving...or the head, if we're talking about Inferi."

"Isn't that a bit excessive?" Harry asked, as the Bloody Baron merely rolled its ghostly eyes.

"Inferi are created by conjuring the spirit of the deceased and wrapping them in the flesh of the dead, and they are usually sent off to incite fear in the hearts of the enemies. Do you really believe that

in thousands upon thousands of years, spells didn't evolve? Alas with evolution came complacency...I still remember when at Hogwarts we were taught how to best blast a war scorpion, instead of...how to transfigure a chalice into a crow and vice-versa." The tone of disdain in the ghost was evident, as he shook his head in disgust.

"But...I mean...there aren't books about it in the library!"

"The restricted section contains little," Henry slowly admitted, "Because many books were purged following Grindelwald's war. I cried tears of anger and rage at the sight of the papers combusting and being destroyed, many penned by my very hand...and never as much as that day did I bless the name of Salazar Slytherin, for his cunningness saved the few I gifted you."

"I'm sorry." Harry whispered back, "Madam Pince would have had a heart attack at seeing that." He commented with a light grim smile.

"Her mother did have a heart attack actually." Henry replied with a quick nod. "She passed on clutching a book, must have run in the family I suppose."

Harry stood quiet for a moment, clutching his wand before shaking his head slowly. He took a deep breath as he once more left his wand in its holster by his wrist, and with that, the wooden stick disappeared from sight within the invisible robe.

"How is being a ward of the ministry?" Harry asked slowly, "I mean...I just don't want to think about it, but...it's what I'm going to end up as. I'll be out and about, in a cranky orphanage with cranky people and..."

"You could always try and talk with your parents, young Harry." The Bloody Baron remarked, "I know something happened within Dumbledore's office that concerned them however...You would do better to remember that you are undercover."

"Undercover huh?" Harry muttered. "I...I just wanted to learn magic. You know, the flying, the sawing in half a guy and sticking him back together, the abracadabra that made people look in awe...and here I am, learning how to make a piece of wood spontaneously combust after tot minutes, or how to best bleed out someone."

"The world is a dark place, Harry." The Bloody Baron nodded, "Some things just happen, there is no fate or destiny to tie us...except prophecies, which I find appalling."

"App-what?"

"Appalling." Henry remarked, "Dreadful and shocking."

"Like Helena when you make her angry?" Harry commented with maybe a bit of cheek in it. The Bloody Baron blinked once, before displaying a light grin.

"Oh my, you are absolutely right. That's what led me to her in the first place actually, and she was smart and quick witted too...stole my heart that witch did." The ghost then mumbled something Harry didn't catch, shook his ghostly head once, and then gestured towards the other side of the room, where a big map stood hovering.

"Now, let us resume the magical geography lesson." The Bloody Baron commented, moving closer to the map with Harry in tow. "Where did magic originate from?"

"Sanskrit tongue...no, the Neanderthals." Harry pointed out quickly.

"Indeed. Once they developed magic, magic changed them." The Bloody Baron added, "from there, they moved away disappearing from the other 'humans' and evolved, bringing into the game..."

"Atlantis?" Harry hazarded, earning a quick nod from the ghostly teacher.

"Exactly...and Atlantis was known to hold the most powerful magic and powers, to be the cradle of artifacts and magical trinkets...many things were created, many more were brought into the fold from elsewhere...and then the stupid idea of making everyone their equal came." The Slytherin's ghost spat that out in disgust, as it hovered close to Harry.

"You cannot make a pig a butterfly, well, of course you can with transfiguration, but the effects do not last! They disappear after a moment...and because of that, some things are best left to the imagination...like turning all muggles into wizards, for example."

"The Hubris of Atlantis is the starting point of wizardry in the world, Harry." The ghost spoke clearly, "From there came the destruction of the brightest of cities, but also the release of magic within the other peoples...even those who should have held no merit in having any of the gift's powers! The Atlantis people believed in equality, in all being the same and with the same benefits...they were idiots, and magic made them pay the price for it!" It was hotly that the Ghost spoke, its hands flailing around as it spoke. "That did however bring magic to the world...so maybe they weren't so wrong to begin with, were they?" The Baron spoke with a grin, one that Harry had come to interpret with the usual 'now comes another brain-rape question'.

"So tell me, were they wrong, in destroying themselves, their magic, their very souls, their city...all for the benefit of the rest of the world? Were they children asked if they wanted to die and lose their souls? No! Was anyone warned of what their leaders wanted to do? No!" The Baron shook his head, "Yet they did it never the less...absolute good is no better than absolute evil!"

"B..."

"But there is no proof that what I'm saying is the truth, is there?" The Bloody Baron remarked drily, "Just as there is no proof of truth or lie without facts behind them...but Atlantis is nothing more than a legend now, isn't it? And yet...aren't wizards myths too? Aren't dragons? So are ghosts, right? You see...that got me thinking." The Baron commented, "If muggles can believe in magic, even with the statute of secrecy, then why can't we wizards believe in Atlantis? Why can't we believe in the box of Pandora? Why can't we believe in everything else that we claim doesn't exist? The answer...is fear." The ghost shook his head, before pointing with its fingers to Moscow, and then tracing a line that went to Berlin, then Paris, then Rome and finally landing on Athens. "Fear is such a powerful tool, young Raven...you have no idea what fear can really do...you have no idea." The eyes bore into the kid's scared face, and with a slight wicked smile the Bloody Baron quietly added.

"Remember young Raven: there is nothing that people fear the most, than that which they believe lays hiding in the darkness...this lesson is over at the moment." The ghost's next words cracked through the

tension that had built up in the room, as Harry took a deep breath that warmed him up considerably.

"We will see each other next week. Now it is time for your public training to get...those kiddies spell under wraps. I expect full marks on your examinations, young Raven." The Baron commented, "May Salazar's cunningness guide you well."

With a quick nod, Harry left the room of requirements. Once the door closed behind him, he carefully made his way back towards the common room, hoping against all dire chances that nobody would actually try anything. Of course, he was wrong. Apparently Lillian Potter had decided to intercept him while he was walking alone towards the Ravenclaw tower.

"Harry!" The girl exclaimed, stopping him by firmly standing on his path to the stairs. "Listen...I'm sorry about Ron, but..."

"Cut this off, Potter." Harry hissed, the final word coming out as a strangled angry growl, "Sorry doesn't cut it. I want nothing to do with you or any of your friends, so move."

"Hey! That's unfair...I didn't think he'd really curse you, or Hermione would point her wand at you, bu..."

"You think I care about whatever excuses you can come up with, Potter?" Harry remarked drily, taking a strange sort of twisted pleasure at using that surname by holding contempt and anger in the voice. "You held me at wand point together with them, I'm sure. I do not care what your blatant idiocy told you was right, I only care to be left in peace. Now move before I remove you."

"What are you going to do? Hex me? Use that spell you used on the troll? I asked about it: it's a dark spell and..."

Harry chuckled, shaking his head slowly. "You ignorant child." He muttered, "You who know nothing and speak but of hearsay...stay on the stairs, I'll take the lift."

He turned around, ready to leave, when Lillian's exclamation stopped him where he stood.

"Why are you acting like this?" She asked slowly. "This isn't you. You..."

"People change, Lillian." Harry remarked, "But why don't you ask your proud mother if, by happenchance, she knows what her sister did?" The boy added without turning around. "And don't think you know me only because we exchanged letters. You know nothing."

Then, Harry began to walk. He still had an extra hour after curfew, so he'd just have to wait for that time period before heading back to his dorm.

"I told you it has to be him!" The voice snapped behind him as he headed towards the library. "I'm sure he's planning on taking it with him..." He turned around quickly, but raised an eyebrow in surprise. There was no-one there...strange, he could have sworn there was at the very least Ron Weasley behind him.

Harry started walking once more, and then abruptly stopped. He heard the muffled steps come to a halt a second later, and this time he whipped his wand out as he turned to stare angrily.

"Come out right now." He ordered.

Nobody of course moved.

"Clearly you haven't heard me, Weasley." Harry muttered, "But I swear, you may think it's funny to hide, but remember I always hold my word. So, what is it your brainless brain accuses me of? Let me guess, maybe that I want to steal the Philosopher's stone?"

"See!? Now you'll be coming..." As Ron emerged from an apparently invisible...no, invisibility cloak, holding his wand in his hand, Harry's own shot downwards faster.

"Yeah, drop the..." Of course, Ron had to misinterpret the gesture.

"Cuspis Terrae." A blunt rock rose from the pavement of Hogwarts so fast that the red haired boy lost his footing, falling backwards with a sharp thud. In a moment, Harry was above the boy, his right foot holding onto the boy's neck to keep him down.

"You know, Ronald? I am an extremely patient person. I live by the philosophy of letting people go by as long as they leave me alone...I swear, do this again and I will learn the Obliviate spell and I will use it on you until you remain as a wrecked babbling foul." Harry grabbed the boy by the sweater, pulling him upwards so that his eyes could look straight in his. "Did I make myself clear?"

"Y...Yes." The boy nodded quickly, as Harry grunted and left him on the ground.

"Good Weasel. Maybe we can make a house pet out of you." Spatting that out in disgust, the Ravenclaw finally managed to reach his intended destination of the library, where he managed to sit down with little to no effort or noise. He stood in the furthest away corner, and with a huff, the book sanctioned by the Ministry on 'Non-lethal spells for dueling' was opened at page ten.

The beauty of the Expelliarmus was that it was safe, easy to use, and only aimed at the wand. It also was suggested as the most practiced spell for dueling, because it brought an end to any duel with little to no problems.

It infringed against shields and because of that was easy to counter. As Harry took a deep sigh, his mind finally calming down after the affront of two out of three of the 'Gryffindor's pains', he settled into a comfortable lull. Setting his back against the chair, he flipped through another page gently, his eyes slowly moving to the rest of the people around. Many were cracking up on the books, readying themselves for the examinations that were to come.

A few were breaking down in sobs and tears for the upcoming Owls and Newts...or how they'd end up doing, but no Ravenclaw who had to do one of the two exams was in the library except him.

The Ravenclaws were probably currently doing their famous crack-up session in which they barraged whoever walked with questions. For every question answered wrongly, a spell of the program tested would be flung and countered, hopefully, by another student. Stray spells were flying all around at that time by then, and yet Harry would have preferred to brave the common room then to stay there.

His roommates were apparently a tightly knitted trio who stood by themselves with other kids, and while they weren't necessarily cold

to him, it wasn't as if he had befriended any of them. Neville hadn't contacted him since the Christmas gift, and if that was by any chance due to him still being a bit 'beneath the radar' or the boy being a natural coward, Harry didn't know.

Being a Hufflepuff and being unable to cope with stress probably broke him down a bit before this first years 'exams'. Exams...the ghosts knew what it would be, and of course the portraits didn't hide their pleasure at helping Harry know what would end up being required of him.

Dancing a pineapple was something he could now do with his eyes closed.

If only he could do his exams earlier...

He'd end up sooner into the orphanage, wouldn't he?

There wouldn't be any helpful ghosts with him. There wouldn't be any magic. There wouldn't be any wizards. There wouldn't be house elves to feed him. There wouldn't be portraits to speak to. There wasn't going to be anything for him to do except...

"Harry." His hands held the borders of the book a bit more tightly. What did the bushy haired girl want now? Was this like the ghosts of Christmas? Did he have to suffer the brats of Gryffindor? One side of him was pointing out how he was eleven years old too, and that he shouldn't call them brats because he was one to begin with. The other side of him, the rational one, was pointing out how he wasn't a brat because he had killed a troll. Done the first blood, he was an adult. At least for the Bloody Baron's old rules that came from the Middle Ages.

"Look. I'm sorry we keep being on the wrong wavelength, and I wanted to apologize for having..." Hermione's words died out as she was probably realizing Harry wouldn't let the book drop from his face.

On his side, the boy was trying to find a way out of there that didn't involve having to spat out more insults than needed. Was it that difficult? He had chosen who to associate with; the fact that these people kept on harassing him and coming at him time after time was starting to get on his nerves.

"Are you listening to me?" Harry took a deep breath, before slowly letting his book fall down to stare coldly at the girl in question.

"So...please, could you at least accept my apology?" Harry simply held his gaze on the girl that began to fidget with the strap of her school bag, moving her fingers on the surface and drumming alongside it.

"What do you want?" The boy asked, deciding to cut the chase.

"Can you recall the other houses, please?" Hermione whispered, "I...I know you did something, I mean it. You're friends with Malfoy of all people and..."

"What are you implying with that?" Harry hissed, raising an eyebrow. "What exactly are you trying to tell me? 'Recall the other houses' doesn't help me understand."

"Gryffindor was the house where people brave of heart could go and be among peers. Now it's the house of bullies and arrogant rule breakers. Lillian is planning to stop playing Quidditch because of what the other houses are whispering behind her back, and the entire house is alone, and taking it out on her. I know you did something. I want you to stop it." Hermione murmured. "Please."

"Why would the house of the brave of heart take it out on the Girl-Who-Lived?" Harry replied, his brows furrowing.

The girl apparently didn't want to explain the reason, but in the end, the dam broke.

"It was innocent at first: the Slytherin's first years were making a mess about her being a first year and not entitled to play. The other houses didn't care about it, and neither did us...we just thought they were being jealous...but then I saw you heading towards the Slytherin one day, and the next moment you walked out with them. From that day, I checked and double checked to make sure, they acted nice. Hufflepuff-nice. I didn't think you had anything to do at the time...but the more time passed, the more the Slytherin became known just as 'other students' not as 'those Slytherin brats'. I thought Malfoy was the head of it all, but then...then I saw you helping him after Ron had cursed him, and once more I realized that what Malfoy was doing couldn't have come from his brain...but I still didn't doubt

you. You were Lillian's cousin after all: you wouldn't so deviously demolish her like that without reason, would you? And then...then Ron came speaking one day of Malfoy sneering at him about the power of Propaganda...and that was a distinctive Muggle-term. I knew it had to be you. It all made sense then. Slytherins weren't slandering us: they were simply relating the events in a different light. Fred and George weren't harmless pranksters, but arrogant troublemakers. Lillian wasn't a merited exception, but a rule breaking fame hound that had the backing of the teachers...You gave them the ideas, and the Slytherin followed you. You are the King ...right?"

As Hermione rambled on, Harry's face paled. Had he really done all that?

He...he had just talked to Draco, under the influence of the Bloody Baron.

How could only that little thing...do all this? This was a boulder falling down and growing as it reached the end.

"The more Lillian won, the more the other houses understood. The first years became vicious, and when the exam times came around, Gryffindor was alone...and of course they gave the fault to her." Harry was trying to appear uninterested, but there was something off about it. He was the King?

Did Draco go around and use that as his nickname? Or maybe that was how they referred to him for the purpose of...

The plan is in motion, King.

Merry Christmas, King.

He was such an idiot! His eyes bulged in shock as his lips trembled slightly. It wasn't someone who had been writing to him with the nick of 'King', it was his nickname that stood in the address.

He was King.

He...He had to ask Draco just where the hell did that particular 'Codename' come out from. It was kind of wicked on one side, but on the other it just wasn't something he could use like that.

"So please, I'm sorry...I'm sure Lillian came to apologize to you too even if it wasn't her plan..." Oh yes she did, on the stairs, and he had just angrily retorted to the girl and walked away. "Please. I was the one angry at you, I was the one who took out the wand first...and Ron got kicked out of Transfiguration as it is. Can't you just...if not me, at least Lillian? She was in tears when she came back. Please. Please. Please. She needs friends, and you're the popular one and..."

Harry James no-longer-Dursley was the popular one?

Harry was looking at Hermione as if she had just sprouted a second, no, a third or even fifth head. He was the popular one? He barely talked to people. Draco was the one with whom he had spoken the most and he, suddenly, was the most popular one?

He was the one whose real parents had left him, abandoned him, and suddenly...he was the popular one? He? He who was now a ward of the ministry?

"First you threaten me...then you come and beg me for mercy?" Harry hissed, clenching his fists. "You hope for a rewind button? You seek a restart? A blank slate? Well...grow up. Welcome to the real world. There is no restart."

Hermione bit her lip, closing her eyes for a moment before nodding and facing him again.

"We think someone wants to steal the philosopher's stone from the third corridor...we tried asking for help from the professors, but..."

"Now you even want my help?" Harry remarked curtly. "Just how much..."

"Wait. Please...at least listen...then I won't disturb you any longer, I swear." The boy looked at her one last time, and then nodded slowly.

"We think Voldemort's coming back. We think he's working with Snape...the unicorns dying were..."

"War unicorns now, Godric? Are you an utter foul!?"

"A clear sign of someone on the verge of death still hanging on...we think Voldemort didn't die that night, but was grievously wounded, and now with the philosopher's stone at Hogwarts, we believe Snape is actively working on bringing the dark lord back to its full force...Dumbledore is going to leave Hogwarts the four of June, which is at least a week away, and..."

"No." Harry replied shaking his head. "I have better things to do."

"What the hell can be better than saving the school from Voldemort's return?" Hermione whispered back quickly.

"Maybe the fact that you're seeing the shadows of kittens for the dragons..." Harry remarked, not even sure it was a proper figure of speech, "And also, some people spend their time better by studying or working on spells...not staying with people who positively hate their guts and who might just stand him up again...isn't that right?"

Hermione's downcast head was all that Harry needed to know. He knew the girl didn't really have any way to convince him to go, and as such, he actually didn't have to...and he wouldn't have, not even if they had suggested him to go and become rich.

He had been burned enough by trusting others. He had been stood up enough times, and lied to far more. He wasn't going to go on the path of a Nazi Hitler, but he certainly refused to become a Gandhi.

The Headmaster had toyed with his head. The world had toyed with his feelings and himself, and as Hermione Granger left the library downcast, he knew, he just knew, that by choosing this outcome he had begun to walk upon a path. A path that he had no idea where it would lead him, but that, no matter where...would still be a path, his own.

And so, the exams went by without a hitch, and nothing of importance happened, nothing that he knew of, of course.

It was as Harry stood at the parting feast made by Hogwarts, sitting among the other Ravenclaws, that the points would have brought the lead to Slytherin one more year. The Slytherins were actually looking at him with bright smiles, and that was something he was perplexed about. Maybe he had misinterpreted

Dumbledore...maybe he really wasn't that much keen on letting Gryffindor win.

"As we reach the end of the school year," the Headmaster spoke standing up, "We bid goodbye to those who graduate." A deafening roar from the Ravenclaw's Newt examined came up, with people crying tears of joy, "And we welcome these warm months of holiday. However, some things must be taken into consideration..." And with that, the cheers died down to a bare minimum.

"It has come to my attention that an object protected by the school was at risk of being stolen. For the great courage demonstrated in safeguarding it, I hereby award Miss. Granger, Mr. Weasley and Miss. Potter seventy-five points each."

The points of the house had stood at five-hundred thirty for Hufflepuff, five hundred-seventy for Gryffindor, Five hundred- ninety for Ravenclaw and Six-hundred sixty for Slytherin...with the addition of two hundred twenty-five points...Gryffindor went straight out on top at Seven-Hundred ninety five.

"I think a change of colors should..."

And chaos, pure unbridled chaos, erupted.

Had it been a different Slytherin, one still snubbing the other houses, one still busy hating the rest of the world, then nothing like what happened in the hall that day would have ever happened. In the span of five minutes, Gryffindors went from happiness to outright dread, because the Hufflepuffs were the first to scream. Nothing makes a Hufflepuff angry as cheating. The Ravenclaws joined next, and soon the Slytherin realized that for once...someone was backing them up.

"Silence!" Albus' yell, powered by his magic, brought the entirety of the hall to silence. "What is the meaning of this? Surely you should..."

"Shut your trap you old man!" A Hufflepuff exclaimed, making Madame Sprout pale. "This is cheating! The King is right: you're not impartial!"

"Yeah!" A Ravenclaw piped in. "What did they do to get all those points, huh!? Seventy-five points each to safeguard something? What the f..."

"Language!" Filius exclaimed hurriedly, but soon the silence the Headmaster's yell had brought lasted little to nothing and evaporated, to leave chaos once more unbridled and ready for the fight of its life.

"I will not have..."

"That's cheating."

"Slytherin deserves it for once!"

"God help me if you let the reds win!"

"Let them have the cup!" Another voice yelled, belonging to an older Ravenclaw. One that Harry had seen hanging around Basileus and the other kids, and that yell...that suddenly silenced the rest of the hall. Harry's eyes travelled to meet those of Draco, who was actually looking at him in wait...he nodded.

He didn't know why he nodded, only that...he could trust the Ravenclaws to be the most devious.

"Mr. Hilliard, right? I must admit I am happy to see maturity in the house of Ravenclaw at least." Dumbledore remarked with a light smile.

"Actually, Headmaster, the reason I wish for Gryffindor to hold the cup is for them to keep it, and display it as the symbol that in life it does not matter hard work, loyalty or being smart: only having the girl-who-lived on your side and that corruption always works. So for the lesson of real life to impart upon the others, indeed! Let the symbol of hatred and division be granted to the bullies, to the worthless scum that believes itself the greatest! Let them have the cup! The cup of hatred and anger! The cup of division and selfishness! The cup to the scum! The cup to the scum!"

"The cup to the scum!"

"The cup to the scum!"

"The cup to the scum!"

And like that, Harry understood.

The burned ground tactic was used by the Russians during many of its wars. It was a simple thing actually: destroy your fields so the enemy can't profit on them. In this case...the cup, the symbol to which they had battled for points, was now no longer a symbol of worthiness...but one of hate and division.

It was the perfect turn around. Get the object one works hard for and make it worthless in the eyes of everyone. In doing so, Harry realized that he hadn't been the only one to...

His head whipped quickly to where Basileus was seated, both of his hands intertwined and his eyes looking at him half-narrowed. There was a small smile on the red haired boy's face, soon followed by a light wink. The boy had been doing a pre-written speech. He had done so because Basileus had prepared it, but the reason why...why did the teen actually help him?

The Gryffindor table was now filled with downcast persons. The few who yelled back were silenced by the deafening roars coming from the other three Houses, and in the end, the last day of school at Hogwarts ended with the festering hatred for the house of the brave.

As Harry stood up, together with the rest of the Ravenclaws, Draco literally charged straight for him.

"You were right...and this? This was genius, pure Slytherin."

"Yeah pal." Flint patted him on the shoulder, "Wonderful."

"We showed them all." Vincent commented.

"Long live the..." And then the rest of the Slytherins bolted to shut Gregory up.

"Shhh..."

"Ehm...could someone explain to me the...codename?" Harry whispered, as he began to walk towards the Ravenclaw tower, followed by the rest of the Slytherin.

"We thought that if Great Britain had a Dark Lord, and it failed against the Potter brat," Draco began, "Then all we needed was someone bigger. And bigger than a lord there's a King, isn't it?"

"You gave the soundest plan, Dursley." Flint commented, "And since none of us Slytherin trusted one another with the position, we remembered your words: so we chose you to lead us, and we followed your lines. Worked like a charm!" Snapping his fingers, the Slytherin's chaser chuckled. "No matter the color, you're a true Slytherin to us."

"Owl me over the summer." Draco exclaimed, as he and the rest of the Slytherin went one way while he had to head upwards. "I'm sure we can come up with something else to do next year!"

And then, Harry was left alone to climb the Ravenclaw tower. The train would depart in a couple of hours, and by then he'd be...where would he be actually?

It felt like being covered in wool. The waiting, the moving, the walking over to carriages, the heading over to the platform, then the ride back in silence in his carriage...his ears were buzzing with thoughts as his heart clenched in fear. Someone would probably be looking for him at the train station. It had to be the case.

As he grabbed his stuff and descended from the station, he saw students being reunited with their families. He saw people hugging one another and tears of joy. He saw all this, and he looked at Machiavelli who looked back at him.

With a soft hoot, completely submerged by the noise of the passerby at the station, Machiavelli flapped his wings once from within the cage, before turning its head towards the exit. A man dressed with a black robe and wearing a leather jacket stood there, holding a sign with the name Harry Dursley on it.

It was with a heavy silence that Harry headed off towards his destiny.

Well. In his mind at least, because the rest of the station had no trouble making noise, there was silence.

Lilly Potter

She had been utterly shocked by the sight of the house cup, the prized cup that in her student years she would have killed to possess, become nothing more than a hateful sign of division and actually something to be glad not to have. She had kept her mouth half-opened in sheer surprise at the speech of the older Ravenclaw, one of the students in the final year of school and that had thus nothing to lose. Yet she had heard the rumors since the beginning of the year done against her Lillian and Gryffindor in general.

She had told her daughter not to worry, that everything was completely normal. It was just jealousy, it would pass. She was a natural at Quidditch and even Minerva had gone to great lengths to make it possible for her to play. Actually the rules only said a first year couldn't possess a broom...there was nothing against a teacher or a parent 'loaning' one for an extended period of time.

James had been so proud to see his little princess fly in the air at the first matches.

She had been scared senseless, but only because she knew of at least fifty-nine ways for someone to break a bone while playing Quidditch, and of course she had clearly not hyperventilated when her daughter had launched herself to eat the snitch. Clearly.

Dumbledore's last point giving, however, had made her uneasy from the very beginning. Why antagonize even more the situation? The other houses had even cheered on Slytherin with the cup. Yet the Headmaster had given it to Gryffindor.

She didn't like what had happened afterwards, but then, when she had seen the son of Petunia being congratulated by some Slytherins...

Of course the boy was just a kid, eleven years old...it had to have been Tuney planting ideas in his head that since his aunt was a horrible freak than her daughter was one too. She didn't fault the boy. Still, having her girl on the verge of tears back at home, and

later on crying on her bed, didn't make it simple for her to merely forgive the boy.

She knew her sister wouldn't answer her by owl of course...There was just one thing left to do. With James remaining home, and trying to console their daughter, she walked briskly outside of the Potter Manor's wards and then apparated at Privet Drive 4.

She was wearing muggle clothes, at least hoping her sister wouldn't outright freak out at seeing her with a shirt, a sweater and a pair of jeans.

Walking slowly towards the door, she began to mentally prepare her speech.

'Listen Tuney, keep the hate between us alright? Don't make your son spread malicious lies about my daughter! I know they were happily owling each other this summer, so don't try and...'

Lily knocked on the door, and then she waited.

She knocked once more, but no-one came. It was lunch time and her sister was bound to be at home...she had seen at the station Harry being taken away by a wizard from the ministry, probably to instruct the boy about the risks of underage magic in front of muggles. Something that was done every now and then by those wizards who didn't have anyone magical to explain it to them in the family.

Which was a bit strange: she was part of the family, wasn't she?

Even Lillian was.

She knocked harder.

Things didn't add up.

Her wand was in her hand and Alohomora was at her lips when the door finally opened.

"Hello, how may I help you?" An old woman spoke to her. She had bright white hair and a pair of deep cerulean eyes.

"I'm...Potter, Lily Potter...is my sister Petunia here?" The woman asked, slightly nervous.

"The Dursley moved out in mid-November." The old woman replied with a smile, "They sold the house and went to America." Lily breathed in relief; of course there would be a ministry's wizard at the station then! The portkey needed to transfer one from England to America would need to be issued.

"I'm sorry I disturbed you Madam...did they leave any number I could contact them with?"

"I'm afraid not..." The elderly lady seemed apologetic, and with a small nod of understanding, Lily Potter walked back and once out of sight apparated away.

She'd end up having to flu-call Britain's consulate in America and then get to find out where the Dursleys had bought a house...and maybe they could make it a summer adventure: go and find Tuney and make her stop having Harry bullying their daughter.

James would be all for it, especially if pranks were to be involved.

Somewhere

"And one-two-three go!" A light soft Jazz music began to swing around the badly lit club. People whispered to one another, wearing tightly fit tailored suits and some smoking cigarettes or rolling up tobacco for their pipes. A small wisp of smoke moved out of the way of Severus' eyes, as the wizard found himself sitting in a private booth in a corner.

"Why are we here now?" The man asked, barely containing his anxiety.

"Calm down...you're among friends." The Voice replied.

"I know that, but this...this nation isn't exactly a nice place for those like me to stay in..."

"Hush and say no more. You're with me tonight."

"Voldemort's plan is brewing up...Albus has already sent his men at the orphanage."

"I know that, Severus. I know that." The Voice remarked.

"When are we going to act then?" The potion's master asked.

The voice hummed a bit with the same tone as the music, before finally whispering.

"When the second year ends of course...if all goes well, the third year will be spent in Durmstrang, and if all goes badly..."

"We'll be dead."

"Death is but a door, Severus." The voice remarked drily.

"Wasn't it Time is but a door?"

"That was Rasputin. I'm smarter than a Ravenclaw old coot."

"If you say so..."

And humming, the owner of the voice went over to the ballroom to dance.

Severus gurgled back in his throat the utterly horrendous dancing style of his colleague in plot, and drowned his sorrows.

The School year was done, what remained now was the rest of the summer.

Author's notes

Now! I need to know if you'd rather I'd complete the stories by 'book' or if you prefer that I change the title of this story outright and hold it like that for all seven 'books' of the HP thing.

That the case you'd have to look at the headline of each chapter to know when a new 'book' start, but one wouldn't need to subscribe to more than one.

I'm just putting it here (because I've got more chapters to go yet) to get opinions.

That said!

Q&A to avoid getting gunned down by angry people:

The only thing I can actually answer without giving away plot-points at the present is that no, Quirrell clearly didn't steal the stone, and the three 'heroes' didn't actually end up protecting it. They 'guarded' the mirror of desire (Miss Potter did) but no Quirrell or other Voldemort Spy came to it.

Ehh...the mystery thickens!

Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum 22

The 'title' of the collection becomes 'The chronicles of the King'. This chapter is actually the 'epilogue' wrap up of the first 'Book': Harry Dursley and the Philosopher's Conundrum.

The orphanage room was small, but clean. A plastic desk with a plastic chair was on one side, while a slightly mangy smelling bed stood on the other. The light filtered through a squared window that could only open slightly downwards, probably to avoid the orphanage's charges from plummeting to their deaths. The floor was made of concrete as were the walls, all pearly white and recently painted too.

The orphanage was made with the intent to keep the wizard orphans close by the ministry, and the charge's wands were confiscated upon arrival and kept in storage until the time for Hogwarts came again. Homework was the only solace possible, because except for the school books, nothing else was available. Except for the wand however, Harry managed to keep his invisible cloak on him, because just as Helena had said, they couldn't see it or sense it.

There was no library in the building as well as training grounds and certainly no magical rooms. The only thing available was the common room, where lunch and dinner was served. There was a small dingy park that even held grey dying grass, and the sun of the hot months blared upon the orphans with little to no happiness that the summer months usually brought.

The orphanage was thus not a place of unspeakable evils, but certainly it wasn't either a place of happiness and colors. It was bleak.

Harry eyed with a bit of distaste the dinner in front of him. The cook, a matronly woman in her late fifties with brown hair and a giant nose, hid no little amount of disdain for the boys of the orphanage. She did do a one-hundred and eighty for the girls however, but the most was her settling from a scowl to a small smile. The problem with the dinner was that it should have been some form of meat stew, yet the meat was red and appeared vegetable in origins.

He didn't want to appear like an Oliver Twist with a golden palate, but if one doesn't like something, one shouldn't be forced to eat

it...or at least be given an alternative. The other charges ate without much complaining, and closed off from a chance of speaking to them, all thoughts of the rebellion at Hogwarts squashed away, Harry settled down for a munching and two-liter of water drinking every few minutes.

He'd end up having to go to the bathroom for a long while, but at least it would get him through dinner. It would show the others he wasn't a pampered prince, well, not much at least.

"Is Harry Doe here?" A metallic and clipped voice came from the door, belonging to a pink dressed elderly woman wearing a bright puffy pink hat. She appeared as a sort of elderly grandmother only her smile was far more on the wicked than on the familial feeling.

Harry meekly stood up. He knew of course that the woman was referring to him. 'John Doe' was the name given to those people who died unknown to the police, and since he had been disowned apparently from being called 'Potter', he was now Harry Doe.

"Come with me." The woman, her name Dolores if he recalled correctly, was quick in turning around and leaving the room. As if she believed herself to be better than the rest of the orphans around. Probably true, considering she probably hadn't been left by both her real family and her adoptive one. Harry followed her through the corridors, towards the woman's office.

Inside, he looked perplexed at the sight of a raven haired woman with long curly hair that ended at her shoulders. She was wearing a black robe and held herself tightly upwards, just like a noblewoman of the past. Harry's eyes went from the woman to Dolores, both of whom he had no idea what they were doing there.

"Stand up straight, child." The raven haired woman remarked drily, "I take it he is the one I asked for?" The witch gaze on Dolores was something positively bordering on the murderous.

"Y-Yes, my lady." The elderly woman replied quickly, "Pureblood orphan, no other living relatives." Harry had to suppress a chill travelling down his spine: was the woman...adopting him? He had been there for barely a month, why would anyone actually adopt him? He hadn't even seen the woman before! Listening to Dolores rant out about his clinical health and his blood type, of all things,

made him sick. The fact the lady in question was eying him appreciatively, like one would eye a pork chop at the market, made him nervous and fidgety.

If only he had his wand...well, if he did have his wand he'd tear through a wall and run the hell away from there. He could probably survive on his own till reaching Hogwarts...could he?

"A trust fund for education so he has no needs for schooling..." Harry did try to keep his gaze neutral, but the grimace probably showed through, because the woman chose that moment to lightly smirk.

"Very well." The witch in black replied to the pink monstrosity. "Now, Harry 'Doe'," this time, Harry straightened up at being addressed, hoping it was a yes or no question he could answer to. "Do you like studying? Being in Ravenclaw and all I suppose it's true..."

"Yes, my lady." He parroted Dolores' way of appealing to the woman. He would have gone with Madam, but for all he knew leaving the orphanage depended on the woman in question.

"I am very keen on silence at my house. Silence and respect are a must." The woman spoke once more, coldly. "Politeness also works greatly." The last sentence was said with a bit more of emotion behind, and there was a light tugging on her lips to probably signify amusement, if light. "Finally, I expect optimal grades."

"Yes, my lady." Harry muttered back. He could do the excellent grades with no problem. Silence was easy and respect wasn't difficult. He did pride himself in being polite at the very least...well, it could have gone worse: he had stayed in the orphanage only one month, and nothing bad had happened to him. He held little to no doubt the woman wasn't the kind of 'caring and loving' mother, but anywhere was better than a non-described room in the orphanage.

If he'd get to study and get his wand back, then he'd be fine even in hell.

The raven haired woman nodded curtly, before turning to gaze at the pink dressed woman.

"I wish to file for adoption of Harry James 'Doe'. I am sure this matter can be settled by tomorrow afternoon?" The other woman nodded immediately, a bright smile on her face as if she had just won the lottery.

"Good. Harry, we will see each other tomorrow then." And with that, the woman disappeared with a loud 'pop' sound.

"Ehm..." He had just wanted to know who the woman was, but the curt and brief 'You may go' from the elderly woman had stopped him on his tracks. He turned around and left quickly, not stopping until he reached his room, where he began to put away his stuff.

He should have been excited about being adopted. He should, but that didn't mean he was.

He knew nothing of the woman, he didn't even know the woman's name, and yet there he was trying to make sense of why he had to be chosen...wait.

The pink dressed hag had told the woman about his...pure blood status? He felt strangely sick at the thought. Harry hadn't been chosen because of stupid things like 'Oh you know, I always wanted a child so I adopted' or 'we like your charming personality'. He had been adopted because he was a pure blood. He was starting to believe he had just moved from one type of trouble to another.

He changed into his pajamas, before moving on his bed. Machiavelli hooted softly from its perch, eying him with his head half-turned, the only sign he was actually an owl and not a chicken hybrid. Flipping through the pages of the Prince, Harry waited quietly for the need to sleep to catch up on him, his brain trying to come up with possible treatments he'd receive from the lady.

He hadn't seen much, and he could discern even less, except that the woman in question was probably living alone and belonged to the 'nobility'. Maybe a Slytherin then? If that was the case then would he actually manage to read some books on curses, and train?

The underage usage of magic was tracked through the Trace, a thing placed on every wand that, however, worked on a general area. If there was at least another wizard thus, the trace wasn't effective at

all: it did not track the user, only the place where magic was being used.

Maybe he'd get some more training done? He was far away from even being considered a real wizard, but the few things he had learned were working well...last time he had tried them.

Was he really going to be fine?

He didn't realize he had fallen asleep until he ended up ducking behind a boulder and avoid a hot white jet of fire. Holding his back against the smooth rocky surface, Harry held his wand tightly. Spinning it around in a circular motion, he swiftly extended his arm out of the boulder and unleashed a volley of green colored missiles that detonated in mid-air. Launching himself forward, he passed through a now appeared cloud of purple fog, swinging in his left hand a small dagger.

The figure in the fog was close now, and with quick reflexes he was behind it, slicing the throat and letting the blood spray within the purple cloud. As it fell down with a thud, he spun around weaving another spell and flinging it in the air.

"Fear me worthless beasts! For. I. Am..."

Harry jerked up with a gasp, his eyes looking around him frantically. He was still in the orphanage room, and the clock was ringing. His gaze travelled to his hands, completely clean and thus certainly not bathed in the blood of the killed.

His imagination was probably running wild with the thoughts of him getting to read books once more, and piled up with the incoming stressful transfer, it had given him a nightmare of sorts. It had to be that.

That morning passed by quickly for Harry: having already finished his summer homework, he had little to do except wait. Well, that and talking with Machiavelli.

"If she doesn't like owls we can pass you off as a chicken." The boy remarked, earning an angry hoot in reply. "Or a turkey maybe." The glare of the chicken-owl could have leveled a house, "A parrot-chicken-owl-turkey hybrid might catch her attention enough to..."

The hoot was soon followed by a friendly peck on the boy's forehead, which didn't even draw blood but made the boy smile.

"You know, my birthday is the thirty-first of July." Harry spoke slowly, "I doubt I'll get much of a party this year." He commented, "Well: at least I've got you, don't I?"

The owl kind of purred, bobbing her head covered with soft feathers along the side of Harry's cheek. So Machiavelli was a softie at heart. Good to know...he could try and appeal to that the next time he came up with another suggestion on just who the owl's parents were and with whom they had bred.

There clearly had to be a chicken in there: no doubts.

Repressing a light chuckle, he grabbed a small bunch of owl treats in his palm, offering them to the bird that graciously accepted them. The more he looked at the way the bird was eating, the more he was sure that he either was of chicken ancestry or of duck one...but did it matter?

Machiavelli was his friend.

Just like Watson, if he could at the very least recall who or what Watson was. Even Draco was a friend, and maybe he could finally owl him? The orphanage didn't prohibit its charges from keeping their pets, but owls couldn't be used to fly around because they still were in a muggle neighborhood.

All he could do now was wait, and hope.

Lillian

America, in summer, was hot. The scorching lights of the sun hit with the strength of molten lava upon the fools who walked and trudged upon the concrete pavement of New York. The city was packed with tourists, but at the very least they, being wizards, had enough magic to avoid being pushed, rushed or manhandled by fretting Japanese or Europeans like them. Her father was holding his wand in front of him, a Notice-Me-Not charm on and walking with a bit of a hardened gaze.

They were going to see his cousin's family soon, a 'surprise' visit. The fact her mother was every now and then giggling like a school girl, and that even Sirius had come along...well that didn't bode well.

Sirius Black was her godfather, the flying instructor at Hogwarts and one of the marauders. He was also the one with the nastiest repertoire of prank-curses she had known, and he did wonders to lift her spirit. She would go back to Quidditch next year, and this time there would be no ground for rule-breaking: she'd do the try-outs like everyone else.

Maybe she'd even manage to get Harry to stop being a git and return to being the boy who had written to her about magic and technology and muggle games...

"The address is this one." James muttered curtly, gesturing to a normal wooden door that led deep within one of the many identical concrete buildings of the lower areas of New York. "Should we check to see if they're at home?" His wand was still out, and probably he was referring to using an Alohomora spell.

"The Americans place traces on our wands, James...let's knock first." Lily replied slowly. "I would avoid having to explain to the AMLE why we needed an Alohomora to visit my family." The American Magic Law Enforcement was the magic police of America. They wouldn't bother with notice-me-not charms or similar, but they did have a black-list of known spells that would send any foreign wizard straight to their respective consulate to explain why they felt the need to use such a spell.

So they entered the apartment complex, navigated towards the address given, and then Lily knocked.

Petunia opened the door with a slight frown, not seeing anyone outside. The Notice-Me-Not charm was effective, and as her mother's sister mumbled something about pranking kids, she closed the door once more.

James removed the charm and Lily knocked again, this time with a bit more of strength.

Lillian had expected her mother's sister to snap at them, sneer or call them freaks.

She hadn't expected her to re-open the door, a witty comment on her mouth, only for it to die at the sight of her mother, pale, and then faint.

"Tuney!" Lily exclaimed, quickly moving inside to try to catch her sister from falling badly. "Come on Tuney, wake up!"

When the woman opened her eyes again, the next words struck the assembled wizards cold.

"Dead...they told me you were dead..."

"What? Tuney that isn't funny..."

"Funny?" The woman's eyes now blared with fury, "This is one of your freaking spells, right? My sister's dead." As she stood up wearily, she yelled back at them. "If you don't leave I'll call the police! How dare you play this sick prank on me!?"

"Tuney...it's me, really." Lily muttered in shock, "I don't know who told you that, but..."

"Prove it!" Tuney snapped, narrowing her eyes. "Who was my first boyfriend in High School?"

"...I...I don't know," Lily mumbled, "We didn't talk at all during that time, you were jealous I went to Hogwarts and you didn't, so all I heard from you were how 'that freak' went to a stupid school and nothing more..."

Lillian had half a mind of hexing her mother's sister right there and then, but held her hand when she saw just how much the woman was trembling.

"Did...Did I invite you to my wedding?" Petunia asked slowly.

"You wanted me as a maid of honor, but in the end I couldn't come...Voldemort was on the rise..." Lily replied sadly, her head downcast.

"Lily...I...I was told you died eleven years ago..." The woman murmured, "They gave me your son to grow up for god's sakes!"

And with that, it was Lily's turn to blank out and faint.

Severus

"It's raining men! Hallelujah!" The voice sang while flailing its arms in some sort of way that could actually resemble a dance...if one was drunk enough, like the voice was.

"I...I'm...Drunk...maybe." Severus remarked drily.

"You've had enough, hot stuff." The barman, a pretty enough for his drunken state woman, remarked. "You should get your friend back home...he's angering the Italians in the corner." She winked, "If you need a place to crash for yourself though...I live just a floor above."

Severus blinked. Stood up quietly and without a single word went to grab the Voice by the ear, and then walked briskly outside.

"You need to loosen up, Severus! My contacts are doing wonders!" The voice chuckled, making some sort of twisted expression of an Elvis Presley 'shake-shake' movement while clapping his hands.

The cold air that met them outside brought the right state of mind back in the potion's master that swiftly turned around to stare at his colleague.

"They're already moving?"

"Of course! All you need is magic!" The sing-sung sentence was all that Severus needed to know that yes, being that dead-obnoxious drunk was yet another ploy of the man.

"You see my little, cute, snake...chaos is the result of every single thing. Chaos brings harmony to the world! Chaos for the chaos god! Well...no." The man shook his head slowly, "I believe it was blood for the blood god, but it's a muggle term and it doesn't matter...no." They had walked into an alley by then, the snow having piled up on the pavement and on the rooftops near them, even though they were in the warm month of June.

"Ever went skiing, Severus?"

"No." The man remarked. It was four in the morning, and 'partying' all night long had made him a bit tired and weary, but still...

"Good!" And then, faster than Severus could blink, the Voice had his wand out and pointed at the alley from where they had just entered.

"Now, my dear boy, why don't you go and learn? I have a village to clean...and someone to give the fault to." and turning quickly around, the voice returned towards the alley, singing merrily 'Do you believe in magic'...which made Severus shiver all the more.

The man trudged through the snow, mumbling something about mad men and sleeping needs, when the sun began to rise over the horizon.

It was such a wonderful sight. The sun came up behind the Alps, coloring the sky of a light rose tint for but a second...while the screams of mercy and death came from behind him, where a most colorful and rustic touristic village was suddenly subjected to blood, death and violence.

Magic was really a wonderful and terrible thing.

Dumbledore

The news coming from Greece was troublesome. Some sort of race-purity movement had begun to rise among the wizards, and had started harassing the Turks that came in through the borders to try and reach for Europe. They made no distinction between wizards and muggles, but the reason they were troublesome, for Dumbledore, was completely different.

They weren't much known outside of Greece. Squashing them wouldn't bring him more fame, or grant him enough connections at the Wizengamot to pass some laws that would have helped in the longer run to power. Magical Britain never looked to the outside, maybe because Britain by itself was an island, and islands tended to define clear-cut borders over which many did not dare to venture.

It was a pity. He heard Fawkes give a small sad shrill. The phoenix bloomed where the good of heart stood, but died a bit every time something bad happened nearby. Her color was now ashen, and

soon it would die again. It wouldn't be the first time and not even the tenth. Fawkes had lived through a long amount of time, and had died and been rebirthed even more...it saddened him every time, but there wasn't much he could do.

The Greater Good came before the well-being of a few hundreds Turks after all.

He turned his gaze to the Italian's capital's affairs. Apparently the Universitatis in Artium Arcanorum had just recently changed its headmaster, and Madam Isabella Rossi was making some slight changes in the curriculum. The inclusion of a Dark Arts course was something he would try to pressure into not passing, but his foreign contacts had become a bit unresponsive in the Alps...maybe he could ask Severus, since he had taken his vacation there, to go and bring his 'suggestions' to Madam Rossi.

In France, Beauxbatons had begun to teach their classes about half-breeds and had started to mix the Veelas and the Cockatrices halves with the other students...while hazardous for their health, it wasn't something he wanted to think about...Germany was the problem.

The Universität der Magie of Munchen had gone sparse. His contacts had all been found either dead or killed, signs of dark curses thrown at them with little to no fighting back. It could only mean they had been betrayed by someone, and that whoever it was, he was high enough to know of what he had planned with Germany.

Finally, his eyes went to Russia, the great motherland that possibly held Durmstrang somewhere within its borders...from there nothing was heard, and because of that the old wizard was currently taking a breath of respite. Hearing anything from Durmstrang would be just as good as declaring the rise of another Grindelwald. As long as nothing happened over there...then everything was fine.

Musing to himself, he was perplexed at the sight of Moody flooing in without even warning him, but the look on the auror's face was one of shock.

"Albus! They got him from under Tonks' nose!"

"Now Alastor...you jest." Dumbledore's eyes narrowed as he stood up, "Who took the boy? How? Was he kidnapped? Did he escape?"

"No Albus." Alastor muttered, "He was adopted."

"But...But I made it clear to Dolores..."

"I doubt it mattered to her: she's just received a notification for a seat at the Wizengamot...ties with the Selwyn family apparently." The mad-eye man hissed out the last words, as Albus walked straight in front of him. Fury was barely held in check as the silver haired man did the only thing he could think of at the present.

"Well Alastor...Did Tonks at least see who adopted him?"

"Albus." The old auror began quietly, "That she did."

"Alastor, Merlin help me if you don't give me a name right now!" Dumbledore exclaimed.

Alastor appeared conflicted, for once, and that was something Albus had never seen before. Just who the hell had taken Harry? Just who could have...

Harry

He had expected a giant castle. A giant, dark, broody castle filled with gargoyle statues that screamed 'Vampire!' at every turn. He had expected giant wooden doors and a cold atmosphere. He had expected snobbish wealth and far more luxury. He hadn't expected a lively and comfortable looking cottage with a nice orchard in front, and big luscious trees all around.

He hadn't even expected the sun around, or the Hufflepuff crest proudly displayed on the gate of the fence. He had expected...he had thought...

"Your face is positively funny." The woman remarked with a now bright smile. "What were you thinking of? Dark and gloomy?"

"I...Yes, no, I mean...well..."

The black robed witch laughed heartily, before gesturing for him to walk alongside her.

"Now then, my father's in the backyard probably, so you won't see him till tomorrow, maybe." At that, she gently shook her head, "He's a bit of a head on the clouds man, but you won't find another more dedicated to his studies than him."

"And...he's Hufflepuff?" Harry asked, perplexed at the crests that were practically everywhere around them.

"As sure as the Porlocks in the stables." The witch remarked. "Now you've been really kind not to ask till we were near the door, but come on out with it, I know the question's there."

Harry looked at the witch, already feeling the sickening dread that maybe it was all a farce that upon opening that door there wouldn't be a nice and comfortable place but a dungeon-looking angst filled torture room for him. It was all just so nice, and for no reason?

"Why me?" Harry croaked.

"My father ordered." She replied with a light shrug, "And when he does who am I to refuse?"

"Your father?"

"Oh, you'll meet him!" The raven haired woman commented, opening the door. "I'll show you your room and then you can get settled in."

Indeed, beyond the door there was not stone and humidity, or torture instruments, but a comfortable looking room with a chimney, a flight of stairs in a corner going upwards, sofas and plushy carpets. Shelves filled with books stood around, and what seemed like three walking cushions decided to make themselves known in that moment...one of them trying to pound on Machiavelli who was safely tucked away in his cage.

"No! Bad Mauler!" The woman remarked at the cat, which meowed back in surprise before starting to purr. Machiavelli hooted its indignity at being attacked, and was loudly demanding vengeance in the form of flapping its wings and appearing menacing. The cat hissed back to the owl, and then, the two locked in a deadly battle of stares.

"HOOT!"

"HISS!"

"HOOT!"

"HISS!"

"Machiavelli! Stop it please."

"Mauler! You bad Kneazle! They're with us now you flea bag!" The cat hissed one last time, before turning tail and disappearing in the back, through the backdoor that had a flap mounted on it to let the cat out probably.

"And there he goes, whining to my father." The woman sighed. "I think he's more of a vicious jealous younger brother than my parents' pet Kneazle sometimes..."

"Yes madam." Harry murmured a few moments later, thoroughly embarrassed of Machiavelli's actions, and with no idea what would happen now. The other two cats were apparently keeping their eyes on him, with their curious bright yellow eyes that still made him feel like a mouse being caught between a wall and...a hungry tiger.

Of course nothing could have prepared him for 'this' type of summer.

Absolutely nothing at all...if anything, he now had even more questions that needed answers...and he doubted, he really doubted, he'd get them.

Author's notes

And this is easy when you're evil...

The devil tips his hat to me!

This is the 'Wrap-up' Epilogue of the first book. The Philosopher's Conundrum.

Stay tuned for the next 'Book'.

That said, an anonymous review asked if he could make this a doujinshi? Be my guest!

Last night I received a good gracious of forty reviews and more on a single chapter, so...you're awesome guys! (and girls)

I think one reviewer pointed out about Harry being born in 1980 and starcraft coming later...which I know, since I notified the readers a few chapters afterwards.

Stay tuned for the start of the second 'Book'.

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals 1

Harry looked up from his desk, his eyes softly making sure everything was in check and in order as Machiavelli silently hooted from his spot on his perch near the window. The cottage that had appeared small was in truth magical, of course...meaning it made even Hogwarts pale with the sheer amount of rooms it held within it. That and the amount of 'backyard' the place really had made Harry's mind shut down for a while: more than a normal backyard, the cottage held a jungle, a pine forest, a lake, a mountain and possibly even a desert somewhere in the middle.

All various types of habitats seemingly blended one with the other with little to no fuss, and from his window, his window that as supposed to be barely on the second floor of the cottage, he could see everything as if he had been on the tallest tower of Hogwarts.

At the center of the backyard was a small gazebo, one that he had thought could be easily reached by walking for a few minutes, but apparently if the distance was of any indication, it would take him far more than a day...which actually made it reasonable he wouldn't meet his 'grandfather' any time soon.

His room was wide enough to be spacious, but not filled with any luxury that made it look aristocratic. If anything, it was homely. The carpet was plush and pleasant to feel, the walls were covered with soothing blue and green colors, while the few books in the shelf were all concerning magical beasts.

There was a trunk at the base of his bed, and the bed desk held a nice looking golden lamp, but all in all everything was strangely homely, kind, and sort of fuzzy and warm.

It basically screamed Hufflepuff everywhere.

Literally, if one would have been forced to give a prize for the most 'Hufflepuff' house, this would have been it. Even the name, 'Huffle-Puff' it seemed sort of like a puffy candy of sorts. It was the excessive puffiness that made Harry uncomfortable and out of place. He was used to training grounds, listening to tales of hatred and power or wit and cunningness, he was used to snarky comments or being ignored...he wasn't used to this warmth. It just felt completely and utterly wrong for him.

Having done the tour of his room, he opened his door to leave and came face to face with a house Elf.

"Kreacher is glad to serve Master Harry!" The elf commented happily, "Kreacher heard tales from Hogwarts' elves about Master Harry! Does Master Harry need something?"

"Th...Thank you Kreacher, but I just wanted...to look around...explore a bit." He replied softly, but the house Elf merely nodded quickly with a bright smile. The house goblin actually. He had to be a goblin. They all had to be goblins who had decided to play a prank on the rest of their race and call themselves elves.

He was sure there was at the very least a good reason for said horrible naming...what would be next? The Nymphs would look like the orcs of Mordor or the Dryads would resemble horrendous abominations? He shook his head to remove all those horrible thoughts. It wasn't Kreacher's fault if the wizards had decided that the name of their race had to be 'House Elf'.

He realized that Kreacher was following him, probably to warn him if he entered a room he wasn't supposed to enter, but till then that appeared to be the least of his troubles. He had walked unknowingly inside the library of the place.

"Kreacher. Is this an illusion?" Harry asked quietly to the house elf, who was apparently smiling at being addressed.

"No Master Harry. It is not."

Harry merely nodded, before slowly but deliberately walking towards one of the shelves and taking a book out of it.

'Two thousand ways to bring down a castle's walls' had been sitting next to 'Curses and horrendous potions, a guide for the perfect wicked' and beneath 'The Arithmetic needs in spell creation'. Many of the books were at least four to five inches thick, and the shelves that held them were as wide and massive as those of Hogwarts, and...and there were thousands of shelves.

It was like looking at an interminable amount of knowledge spanning throughout the entire house...and it was there...and...

"Can I read them?" He asked slowly.

"Master Harry certainly can!" Kreacher remarked with a quick nod, "Master Newton gave permission!"

And so Harry found himself sitting down on a comfortable red armchair, a book on his lap and nothing else to worry him.

"Ahem." A voice suddenly coughed in his ears, forcing him to quickly close the book shut and stand up, looking in the eyes of the woman who was holding her right hand at her hip, her gaze narrow.

"I didn't actually believe you would adapt so quickly. I thought you would at least have some questions, you know, the sort of questions that you could ask me, or things like that." The woman wistfully spoke, "Not like I'm usually bored around here mind you, but anything? Something like 'Who are you people' or 'What's your name' or...similar?"

"I...I know your father is called Newton." He commented quickly, "and Hufflepuff is all around, so...I suppose he could be Newton Scamander? Which would make you...his daughter?"

She raised an eyebrow with a surprised expression, before slowly smiling with a tight smirk.

"I'm Bellatrix Scamander né Black, I married Newton's son...who could have been your adoptive father, hadn't he decided that he just had to take five more steps towards a dragon instead of backwards." The woman snapped while rolling her eyes, "Of course he had to do that after my family decided I wasn't good enough of a Black if I had married a stupid Hufflepuff."

"Are you related to Sirius Black? Hogwarts's flying professor?" The fact that Bellatrix laughed at his question made him wince slightly, but then, wiping away an imaginary tear, she remarked drily.

"Why am I not surprised? You must be another one of those Quidditch fanatics that float around like brainless morons." The woman snapped, "Didn't see you having a broom in your trunk though."

"I...I don't fly...I got exonerated from flying," Harry muttered back, his eyes now downcast.

There was an embarrassing silence for a moment, before the woman huffed in annoyance. Harry's eyes travelled back up, to stare at the woman apparently fidgeting with a ring that seemed to have the Hufflepuff mark on it.

"Fine." Bellatrix muttered, "I'm sorry I judged you before getting to know you." She commented, before coughing lightly.

"O...Okay?"

"Good." Nodding curtly, Bellatrix decided to answer, "Yes. I am related to that idiot. At the same time he was disowned by the family, meaning that while we may as well be relatives we in truth aren't."

There had to be a lot of disownment in the family, to bring it...

"Yes." The woman sighed with a stern glare, "It's a convoluted way of thinking but the fact remains that I do, indeed, hate Sirius' guts."

Harry merely nodded. He'd stick this under the things he really didn't want to explore or come to know.

"Nothing else? Come on...you're a stick in the mud kid." Bellatrix remarked drily. "No wanting to duel? No silly wand movements? You know you can train now, right? I know kids would rather fling spells till they drop than...read..."

She hesitated for a moment, as Harry closed his eyes for a moment before blinking them open again.

"Why was I adopted?" He asked carefully.

"I'm not good at the subtle stuff." Bellatrix remarked crossing her arms over her chest. "I told him I was no good at that, but did he listen? Of course not! He could have asked Severus instead of me, but no! Alright kid: I'm here to train you. Show you the real power of magic, not the filthy Expelliarmus and Protego stuff, the wicked one. You know...things like Sectumsempra and a well-placed Reducto. Bone vanishing curses and the likes, things you can't usually find around Hogwarts library."

Harry blinked. Sectumsempra was a familiar spell he had read...somewhere. Just who was the woman talking of, however? And why did she apparently seem to know professor Snape?

"Who is...he?" Harry queried, a bit of nervousness breaking in his tone.

"He Who Must Not Be Named Of Course...Hewomn Bnoc if you want a quicker way to refer him." The woman replied quickly, making her wand twirl in her hand with ease, while looking deeply into his eyes. "So, what do you say? You already did your homework, didn't you?"

"Well yes I did, but...wait a moment!" Harry yelled while standing up and bringing his...of course he didn't have his wand. They hadn't given it back to him yet, and so...

"Waited." Bellatrix said after a moment of silence.

"Huh?"

"You said to wait a moment, I just did that." The raven haired woman commented, "Now that you have wasted a moment of my time, we can get on to business...not in the library, or Newton wouldn't think twice about killing me: he's evil I tell you." She whispered to him, as she gave him her back and started to walk out of there.

Harry blinked, before looking around in hope that somewhere, somehow, something was currently going on that would explain the situation to him.

Since nobody had been willing to help him, he sighed before heading off in the same direction as the woman in question. The backdoor gave way to a small patch of ground that settled in a cobbled square, from which cobbled roads departed to probably circle all around the various 'areas' of the backyard.

In the middle of the square, soundly snoring while taking the sun was a small Cerberus puppy. Harry blinked at the sight of the three headed dog's heads snoring while the animal's tail wiggled in the sunshine. The thing suddenly sniffed the air, before making light growling noises and slowly standing up.

It blinked its six eyes open a second later, menacingly starting to growl in his direction.

"Custos here is just a good old puppy," Bellatrix said with a good grin, "And...well, one of his heads doesn't bite. I can't guarantee for the other two though."

The dog slowly began to walk towards him, growling as it inched closer step by step.

"Could I have my wand back please?" Harry asked, "Or is this Magic Hitler's idea of torture?"

Time seemed to stop for a moment, as Bellatrix' wand suddenly lurched upward directed at him. There was clearly fury in her eyes as she bit her lip, probably restraining herself from hitting him.

"You will not refer the dark lord with the name of a muggle!"

Harry had his doubts at the beginning. He should have listened to them. He should have listened when they told him that no wizard should go without his wand. He should have listened to the Bloody Baron's words of 'Trust no-one whom you haven't placed under Veritaserum and of whom you don't hold his entire family hostage...and even the house pets' or to those of Helena...which were a bit crasser and involved blood magic rituals and unbreakable vows to make triple sure truth was truth and not carefully hinted or edited versions.

No. He had to give the wand to the orphanage's personnel, who probably gave it back to Bellatrix. And he had let himself be led into security, a false lull of it, because of the Hufflepuff's symbols everywhere.

He knew he should have just coped with it and stood in wait at the orphanage for the new term. What a stupid naively thought decision: she wants to adopt me, even though my gut instincts tell me to run I'll still follow her because it's better than the orphanage.

Oh yes. This was the very last time he did not believe his instincts.

The very, damn, bloody last time.

"O...Okay." He exclaimed, "I'm...really...sorry?" He squeaked out. In less than a second, Bellatrix went from 'I will murder you and your descendant' to 'Alright, nice joke'. Harry blinked at the sight of the woman shrugging, smiling a bit, and then grabbing from her own robe's left sleeve a wand, his wand, and throwing it at him.

The next second Custos jumped probably intending on getting the stick.

In the next two seconds Harry had already jumped as if his life depended on it, because it probably did, on getting his wand back. Bellatrix had screamed something, but it wasn't as if it mattered to him. He needed the damn wand.

The crunch sound that he heard wasn't even so bad actually. Like of chicken bones being broken, it was just like when you have crunchy cornflakes and crunch them, you know? The only problem was the pain that blossomed from his right arm, in three different spot, a second later still.

But he was clutching his wand, and he'd died rather than let it go again.

"Stupid. Fucking. Mutt. This. Is. My. WAND!" Harry's yell was something uncharacteristic. He had never yelled in his entire life. He had never felt hatred, pure and unbridled...but this...this was his last straw.

Of course he had tried to bottle up, to reason with the facts, to come to terms with everything...but could one really come to term with utter abandonment, loneliness, fits of jealousy and anger?

Could one come to term with things like those by the use of some 'friends' he had yet to even owl?

The answer was that Harry hadn't yet coped with the fact that he didn't even know what his surname was, or who he was. With anger, hatred, blind pure rage that blinded the boy himself from consequences...he punched the damn bloody Cerberus straight in the nose of the closest head.

He felt more pain and fell down on one knee, but the Cerberus whined and let go with all three of its heads, before moving away from the boy while yipping in pain.

"Yo..." Bellatrix had tried to move to get closer, but Harry had stood back up, his right arm limp but still holding on to his wand by sheer strength of will.

"Stay back! You stay back you bloody Nazi! I don't fucking care! I don't bloody care! Wasn't it enough? Why can't you just leave me alone!? I...Just what do you want with me?" The last question came with a heavy tone, as Harry's entire frame was trembling while the blood had begun to slowly fall on the ground. It was probably the adrenaline's idea that he was still standing. That and the fact that he wouldn't die there: if there was one thing he was, it was at the very least being headstrong.

His wand didn't want self-doubt, and to his wand, at the very least, he wouldn't give that displeasure.

"At the moment, I think you need your arm checked at St. Mungos..." Bellatrix remarked, "But since we can't go there until at least I know I can trust you with where my loyalty lays, I can either Oblivate you, something that the Dark Lord has ordered me not to do, and thus I'm not going to...or try and patch you up...you are going to bleed yourself to death if you do nothing you know?" There wasn't even worry in her voice, or concern. She was just...giving out the grocery list.

"I don't trust you." Harry hissed, moving his left hand to grab his wand.

"Pity. Didn't actually give you a choice." And then of course a flash of red hit him straight in the chest.

Darkness enveloped him once more, but this time, in his dreams, there was a figure clutching his right arm.

"The irony of this is much appreciated. Really." The voice was a bare hiss in the back of his head.

"Likewise I feel someone should have told you, my dear friend, to avoid fighting a Cerberus who is guarding something

important...they are the guardians of the underworld in myth...but the truth makes them the staunchest defenders of whatever they deem their home." This voice he hated. It was deep, friendly, cheerful...something he hated.

"So Bella, once more you demonstrate your unnatural ability to not think." The voice was curt as it rebuked the woman, probably. "And because you did not think, we now have a problem, do we not?"

"My Lord, he..." Wait. Voldemort was there? Voldemort was there and alive and standing near him? Harry was now conflicted on opening his eyes or not. He was now even more worried about what would happen if any of those near him realized he was awake.

"He is awake, yes." The Dark Lord replied, "But afraid of opening its eyes and stare at me I believe...it does not matter. I suppose he wishes for assurance, does he not?" Harry was now positively sure that Voldemort was close to him, possibly his face was hovering over his if the feeling of the man's breath was of any indication.

It was either that or the dark lord suffered from bad breath.

The fact he was willing to think that, in the midst of an extremely critical and worrisome situation only made it even more clearer just how much his brain was freaking out, trying to come up with ways to keep himself sane and within the limits of reason: sarcastically commenting on near-death events appeared to be a way.

"No need to reply...I know what you think." The man began, "But worry not...if Bella can manage to speak instead of act for once, maybe you will find the...new perspective, far more pleasant than the old one." Then Harry heard him stand up, and disappear with a barely hearable 'pop'.

He still wasn't going to open his eyes...maybe if he kept them close enough, all of his troubles would disappear.

"I know you are awake, boy." The woman commented drily, "And if you won't open your eyes the normal way, I can and will enervate you."

Gritting his teeth furiously, he winced in pain as he tried to clench his right fist. The pain shot through his entire right arm that was

apparently held in a cast. He opened his eyes slowly, coming to term with the fact that yes, Bellatrix Scamander was there with her own wand pointed at him.

"Good. Now I will explain why the Dark Lord should be followed, and you will listen to me: if you refuse, or if you try to block my words, I will leave and come back tomorrow. You will not be fed or helped in any way, and you will probably end up in a far worse situation than before, because your right arm is in a temporary cast...basically: listen to me well the first time, because we can always amputate and have another one regrow...but that takes time and is painful."

Harry's eyes widened in shock, but he did slowly nod to the woman, who while smiling grabbed the nearby chair to sit down next to him. In a sort of sick and twisted way, this could be considered just like a mother telling a bedtime story to a kid.

Only this wasn't a bedtime story, but history retold by the Nazis to the others...and somewhere in the midst of it all he knew there would be something he'd end up understanding, because all movements cannot move without at least some truth in it. No falsehood can work without a bit of truth.

"Grindelwald was defeated by Albus Dumbledore, bringing to an end the second world wide war in nineteen forty-five. Albus, who had at first allied himself with him, suddenly turned his back on his friend and by defeating him reached for power beyond imagination...he reached for the heart of the magical world: he became known as a hero...whereas he had been nothing more than a Transfiguration Professor before. So tell me, Harry...how does a professor of Transfiguration, one who had for all his life taught, suddenly manage to overpower and defeat a bearer of great magic like Grindelwald was? One who could fight head to head with werewolves and overpower dragons with his curses. One armed with the Elder Wand, an ancient artifact of power? You want the answer, or do you know the answer?"

Harry knew the answer. The Bloody Baron had actually told him repeatedly what the answer was when you were faced with impossible odds to fight, it kind of was one of the first lessons the ghost had taught him: it was the one that kept the wizard alive.

"He cheated during the duel?"

"Course not. He cheated before." Bellatrix remarked drily, "And by doing so Grindelwald was so severely weakened that Dumbledore managed to easily capture him...instead of killing him. Still, to Dumbledore, it wasn't enough. He had been the youth representative for the Wizengamot in his school years, and now that he had the status, he wanted a seat once more...but to have a seat at the Wizengamot and have earned said seat are two completely different things. The subtle ways of politics demand as much, the murmurs, the whispers...they hiss and whisper and..." and as the woman's voice lost herself, Harry coughed lightly.

"I have a broken arm...could we please get to the point so I can have you bring me to the hospital?" Where, possibly, Harry was of the idea of yelling out loud that he wanted nothing more than to go back to the orphanage and stay there.

"Fine." Bellatrix snapped, "So Dumbledore decided he needed more fame and glory. To that end, he needed a new enemy to defeat."

"You're telling me he made the..." At the woman's narrowing eyes, Harry quickly corrected himself, "Dark Lord up?"

"Of course not! But he took care of guiding him down the road towards power, towards hatred, and in doing so he was directly responsible for his rise, and then later on his fall." Bellatrix thus added, "So you see: it's all Dumbledore's fault."

"I...I'm not even going to try and come up with reasons anymore." Harry muttered, with a heavy sigh. "Just...can I get my arm fixed? Please? Then...I'll go back to studying and forget about everything else. I'll stay in a corner and live a quiet and happy life away from it all..." And probably armed with painkillers till the day his brain decided to burst.

"But I know this isn't enough to convince you, so I'm going to throw in something else, something interesting to know about. In Nineteen Sixty-five Dumbledore becomes the Headmaster of Hogwarts, two years after he had publicly favored the passing law about the registration of Werewolves and following that moment in time, the ban on experimental creatures is enacted. In the nineteen-seventies the Dark Lord starts to rise to power...don't you see the connection?

No? The Dark Lord had seen what Dumbledore was trying to do from the beginning, and he had tried to stop him!"

"What? What does this have to do with Dumbledore being...bad and the Dark Lord being good!? It makes no..."

"In nineteen-seventy three the appeal on House Elf slavery was rebuked. In nineteen-seventy five the Decree Number 5 is approved by the ministry, and you know what that does?" Bellatrix smiled, "It enables ministry enquires to select and discard teachers from Hogwarts if they do not conform to standards. On the outside it seems the ministry trying to conquer Hogwarts, but if the ministry is with the Headmaster...it is a powerful tool to remove people among the staff who are...of different opinions, isn't it?" but still the woman wasn't done.

"In Nineteen-seventy nine Scamander Newton is assigned the order of merlin for his research on magical creatures. Albeit having been the passer of a law against the breeding of different species, you will find out that at Hogwarts said laws do not apply, as 'cross-breeding' is applicable where it is meant to learn..." There was a bright smile on her face now, "Especially if the creatures then are 'killed' as in 'shipped out of the country'. But we haven't finished, oh no! In Nineteen-Eighty, a prophecy is told to Dumbledore." Here the tone of the woman became graver.

"And someone who I will not mention managed to overhear it...in it, a boy born in a very specific timeframe would bring forth a great disaster, and that...that caught the Dark Lord's attention...care to guess who that boy is?"

"Me?"

"Yes, but that was an easy question, so it doesn't count." Bellatrix muttered to herself, "Anyway! The Dark Lord had done all that he could to slip away from Dumbledore's grasp and get powerful enough to face and defeat him, but in the end, he didn't manage the feat. Dumbledore held the Elder Wand and with that there was nothing his spells couldn't defeat. Since tricking him did not work...the Dark Lord made a gambit."

Harry's eyes flinched lightly as Bellatrix' right hand pinched his cheek.

"You are that gambit. He knew that Dumbledore wouldn't have let you live if he could avoid it. So he asked Severus, one of his most trustworthy men, to hold his secrets. To hold them into his very soul so that nobody would know of your existence until the moment, the very precise moment, when we would have come for you, to make you publicly known and safe from Dumbledore's ploys."

"But...but he died because..."

"The Dark Lord knocked out both Potters and then was met with the fierce resistance of Albus, who arrived just in time to discover your disappearance. From there, things escalated to the point where indeed, the Dark Lord was deemed dead by Albus. Now the question you are thinking about is why he did not claim the victory for himself? Because he did not underestimate our Dark Lord...he knew something was going on, and when he found out...it was too late." Bellatrix smiled, "The Dark Lord saved you as an infant, because do not doubt even for a second that Albus Dumbledore wouldn't have had you and your entire family killed if it would have landed him the chance to make some more laws pass...for his greater good."

"For the Greater Good...apologies."

"He is a Nazi." Harry whispered. "He's a Nazi. Dumbledore's a Nazi! He's the kind one! The one all smiles and...he's Mussolini! He's the Magical Mussolini!" The boy groaned, of course.

Dumbledore was just as dangerous as Voldemort. The first wanted to change Britain to Nazism by the inside, by making laws and things against half-breeds while publicly defending them. He was a kind man, but a ruthless monster hid beneath the flesh. Still, something about the Magical Hitler didn't make sense.

"Why didn't he try and come out with being innocent?" Harry asked. "And...if he was forced down his path by the Headmaster...why didn't he try and change?"

"It took him years to realize the plots of Dumbledore, Harry." Bellatrix murmured, "And when the Dark Lord did, he knew of only few among his followers who would have still followed him had he changed his flag. Dumbledore possessed the light, Dumbledore was

the light, and people flocked to him because they thought he would protect them..."

"I...I don't know."

"Of course you don't, but let me say something else: Godric's Hollow was placed under a Fidelius charm. The secret Keeper was Peter Pettigrew, nice, brave, loyal, Gryffindor...and he betrayed the Light side for the Dark Lord...for fear he betrayed them...and he, alone, the sole one, was cast into Azkaban with no trial, no way out...forever held imprisoned, but not kissed no, only...tucked away, because a vow had been made: safety in exchange for betrayal. The question you should ask yourself...is who gave the order to the brave at heart?"

Harry blinked.

He wanted to say something.

He wanted to tear at the woman with his only arm and yell at her how impossible it would be. Had his existence been a trap to capture the Dark Lord? Had the...Albus had laid a trap for Voldemort. Voldemort had taken it...or had faked taking it. Even then...

No...

He...He had been responsible for Harry's ultimate loss of a family...He...

"Now we can go to St. Mungos." Bellatrix remarked, "You see, true neutrality doesn't exist Harry: what happens is that people believe they can keep neutral until something hits them at home. No-one whose house has burned, no-one who has lost his family, his friends, his beloved...no-one who has suffered will ever be neutral. Neutrality is a fleeting concept, Harry. Understand it, learn it...and use it."

And Harry trembled and said nothing more...

Newton Scamander

Bellatrix had barely sent an owl his way warning him of the guest in his house that he found himself sighing. Sitting down near the rose bushes, by his gazebo that granted him the ability to see anything within the various areas of his backyard, he couldn't help but give one heartfelt sigh at the situation.

"So, Dark Lord, how are you doing?" The man asked quietly, before slowly shaking his head.

"I suppose this wasn't a pleasant visit?"

"You know, Newton, I asked you once if blind loyalty to a just cause was all that was needed to reach heaven, yet in the end you never gave me an answer...and I realized, decades later, that there isn't an answer. We do not know if heaven exists, so how can we know of what lies beyond?"

Newton turned, and stared deeply into those black eyes that belonged to Tom Marvolo Riddle. He didn't ask why the man appeared young, as if he wasn't a year above sixteen. He didn't ask why, but he just looked at him with a curious gaze.

"So...you obtained the stone?"

"Please." Tom rolled his eyes, "You should know three kids guarding a stone means nothing for me; I didn't need the stone... that is not the correct answer, Newton."

"I see...in two days the Porlocks go into their usual heat period...will I be there to watch them?" The old man asked, curiosity having the better of him.

"Unfortunately your old age caught up with you, Newton...but worry not, you are not the only one that died this summer by my hand...and you will not be the last, I'm afraid."

"So many bodies...so much death, the way of walking forward in the light, away from subterfuges...that was never your strength, was it Tom?"

"You know me well. Goodbye, old friend." And then Newton Scamander died of a heart stroke, on that sunny day of June with pure white clouds and a bright light blue sky above him.

And Tom Marvolo Riddle walked out, and in silence, disappeared...he had much to do...and so little time.

Author's notes

And we begin again with the start of the 2° Book!

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals.

The first book displayed Harry Dursley.

Now having been adopted, we have Harry Scamander.

Let us see what this year brings to us, once summer leaves place to winter...and what feats will happen?

And of course, I hope I made a mad enough Bellatrix that it can be seen as 'creepy'.

Now we have the vision from the dark side, but Bellatrix still hasn't answered a most important question: why does she still follows Voldemort, if he's not fighting for blood purity in truth and she's one of the few who knows it? Then again, we all know that whatever people say is a lie compared to what they do?

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals 2

It was in silence, that Harry was healed and brought once more back home to rest. The fault had been given to a fallen shelf, upon which he had apparently decided to climb to get a book higher up...the fact the shelf had broken his arm in three distinctive points meant nothing to the healer. Broken bones were healed with some strange spell to set the splinters straight and then a dose of Skelegrow.

When the sun settled and dinner time came around, he could already move his arm. It didn't mean he liked it, but this time he intended on getting his wand back first. Still, it wasn't as if he could ask the woman for the wand now, could he?

He had bowed lightly to the will of the woman, not much because utter understanding another side so quickly would have been suspicious. Dumbledore could have been portrayed wrongly or rightly, to him it didn't matter. Voldemort too could have been an evil Nazi oppressor or a deviated saint, but still he knew he had managed, at the very least, to convince the woman to let him get healed. Then, instead of calling the woman out or asking for help from the hospital's guard, he had simply let her bring him back to the house of Scamander.

The only thing that kept him happy was the fact that, indeed, the invisible cloak worked miracles together with the pocket watch of Salazar. He didn't know if the woman had already intruded in his mind, but she had apparently stuck with the rule saying 'no Obliviates'. That actually was giving points to Voldemort's side instead of Dumbledore's.

He knew of course that the wrongness that came from his gut instinct had to be listened to, and because of that he wasn't prone to believe in Voldemort either. The question was: what could he do?

He could form a third side. Of course that would end up very well, he would just end up going against the two strongest sides of the world and even worst: it would be a child playing to be a hero against people who had fought decades.

It was wishful thinking at best...unless he grew stronger than both 'sides' by the time a clash happened. The question being on where he could find allies... He knew he couldn't rely on lies and deceptions.

He knew he couldn't just walk up to someone and ask them to become his partner. He knew he had to do something else concerning that prophecy that apparently had made Voldemort interested in him, because him being some sort of 'children of calamity' wasn't a good way of putting his future.

Worst, was the idea that Dumbledore had heard said prophecy too.

So if Dumbledore knew he was going to end up being a pain, an evil bad pain...it made sense to make him a weak one. One that he could defeat easily once the time came, cash in more favor with the crowd and then pass more laws...it made sense.

And it made his stomach lurch in sickness and utter desire to retch.

The woman didn't appear as mad, but after all no madman actually seems psychopathic until they smile at you and plunge a knife in your back; all the while probably chanting something about elder gods, Cthulhu and the likes. The problem was that she was cooking, right in front of him, in the kitchen. The fact she was humming a happy tone was positively creepy, but it wasn't, actually, the worst.

What was the worst was that Kreacher was giving him a sympathetic look. Now, when a House Goblin gives you a sympathetic look, and goblins usually live in filth and are known to eat anything, then something bad is bound to happen. What Harry would have liked to know was why the woman had suddenly decided to cook by herself.

"And for our new Death Eater, a dinner made by my hands!" The woman giggled a few moments later. Well, now Harry knew why the woman was positively happy, and he also knew why Kreacher was giving him that look: the stew, if stew could be called, was purple. Squishy, tentacle-filled, and purple.

So...he had passed her 'test' and was now considered one of her colleagues probably. That did mean that he had to keep the pocket watch of Salazar always on his person. He had no doubt they could read his mind, since apparently it was something everyone could do...and abuse.

The stew was chewed as slowly as possible and with as much water as possible, the fact the woman had apparently strange taste buds meant nothing of course.

"I spent four years in Azkaban, you know?" Bellatrix commented offhandedly as she took a sip of wine, "Food was atrocious, Dementors were horrible...but I knew it was all a plan of the Dark Lord. It was his great plan to bring Britain to a new rule."

"I see...so, you follow him because of who he is, and not of what he preaches?" Harry queried, trying to subtly gesture to Kreacher to make his stew disappear and...not having a great success at it.

"I admit," the tone was flirtatious and that gave him the creeps, "I had a really big crush on him when I was young...I mean...I ended up in Slytherin, we were shunned by all the other houses, and yet he had come out of there and become someone strong, really strong. I had the biggest of all crushes on him." She meekly muttered, before slowly shaking her head, "But then again I grew up and ended up falling for an idiotic Hufflepuff who had no qualms walking straight out in front of a Hippogriff and when we did get married, I forgot all about Dark Lords and the rest...until, of course, Dumbledore invited him to watch something concerning dragons."

Bellatrix sighed deeply, staring at her ring, "You know? I was once a Black. We were told about blood purity and the likes, but I never bothered much with it...Sirius certainly hadn't been thrown out at his highest peak of troubles, and that told lots about the patience my mother really had...but then Dumbledore went and killed my husband, I'm sure of it mind you...and now here I am. I just want revenge against the man. If I have to kill or not muggles, if I have to torture people or not...I don't care: I want him dead and the Dark Lord can give me that chance."

There was silence, for a moment. Harry was absentmindedly stirring his stew with what little remained of his wooden spoon. What could he say actually?

"But let's talk about something else!" The woman cheerfully exclaimed a second later. "How did you score in your class?"

The small talk on Hogwarts was soon over, and as Kreacher finally realized that no, he didn't want more salt in the soup but for the soup

to disappear, dinner was over. His wand hadn't still been given back to him, but that didn't surprise him: he'd get it back eventually, wouldn't he?

"Tomorrow morning we will begin training once more...I will hold on to your wand every time that we aren't training." The woman commented after looking at him still hovering in the kitchen. "And we will be going to Diagon Alley to buy your stuff for the second year. I got the list...and I pity the fool who decided that to do muggle studies, one needed Lockhart's books."

"I...See...Lockhart?"

"Gilderoy Lockhart is an idiot." Bellatrix commented, "If he did half the stuff he claimed his autobiography speaks of, he'd be either extremely powerful or already in the Wizengamot. He goes around writing fantasy story and some people buy it. That's all."

How did one write fantasy stories in a fantasy world and actually sell them? Wouldn't it be like writing politics in the muggle world? And those were a bore...but that was a stereotype.

"I see...I don't have muggle studies until the third year though. Safe from that, right?"

"I suppose." Bellatrix mumbled, "If you do take muggle studies on during the third year, I will personally send you a howler a day until you stop taking it." There was some sort of anger in that voice that Harry couldn't place, but it did chill him for a second. The woman was no different than a normal witch one second, and then the next she suddenly said things that chilled him to the bone. It was like watching Dr. Jekyll suddenly morph into Mr. Hyde...while keeping the very same face and appearance.

"U...Understood." Harry muttered, nodding slowly. "Any...Anything else?"

"Uhm...No!" She cheerfully exclaimed, "Have a good night of sleep Harry dear, see you in the morning!"

Then the woman waved at him happily, and Harry scampered away with as much quickness as he could put into a walk that didn't turn it into a mad dash.

He bolted for his school bag in his trunk, and quickly began to skim through the pages. Was there something he could do without a wand? Of course the Baron hadn't taught him anything, because of course he had made it perfectly clear that losing the wand to an enemy meant death and 'selective extermination of the weak of the species'. At the same time, he knew he could try and make runes...if it weren't for the fact that his wand was an active component in tracing them.

There was nothing he could do. The most he could do was to pray that he wouldn't be killed during the night. Still...why did Voldemort want him on his side? The prophecy that made him a being of great disaster? What would he do, wake up one day, waltz over to some sort of big red button with the words 'Armageddon' and push it?

He knew one thing of prophecies: they usually were so much difficult to interpret that they usually went the opposite way the more you tried to fight them. Like that one of 'A great empire shall be destroyed if you cross the river' or 'From your sons shall come the one to defeat you' or 'You will kill your father and marry your mother, and if that's not sick enough you will unwillingly curse yourself too'.

The Greek did have their ways with debaucheries; that much Basileus had told him once during one of the few nights that went by the theme of 'drill the first year with questions'.

Still, as he lay in the comfortable bed, within the most normal looking room of them all, he couldn't help but realize that indeed...the worst wolves are those in sheep clothing.

Lily

"Where. Is. My. Son." Lily hissed with her eyes like smoldering craters of doom and devastation. The poor Ministry employee simply screamed a high pitched girly squeal and disappeared beyond the doors, leaving the spot empty.

"Lady Potter," another employee began, while sweating profusely, "We assure you, we have no idea what..."

"I know you receive notifications when a boy is adopted from the adopting family. So you will now move your pathological underpaid asses and find my son before I decide to..."

"Lily!" James exclaimed loudly, "Blimey! Calm down please!"

"How the hell can I calm down!?" Lily yelled back, "It's been years! Years! I've forgotten about my little Harry for years and you tell me to calm down!?"

"Lily." James face was just like that of a kicked dog, but the man still managed to reply to his wife, "I know, alright? I know...but you're not helping Harry if you tear down the ministry."

"Indeed." A woman dressed in bright pink appeared from behind the door the previous ministry employee had disappeared from, "Dolores Umbridge-Selwyn." The woman presented herself, "I personally oversaw Mr. Doe's adoption to his new parents."

"Mr. Doe?" Lily asked with her eyes open and wide.

"Indeed. Not having any living family left at the time of..."

"And who the hell are we then!?" Lily yelled out in disbelief, "Surely the magic of the ministry would have..."

"I am afraid that a Fidelius Charm is far more powerful than what Minister Fudge has at his disposal currently." Dolores replied curtly, "In any event, the adoption went by smoothly and now Mr. Doe is happily placed in a friendly and warm familial environment where he will certainly flourish." There was a sort of sickeningly twisted sweetly tone in the woman's voice that made Lily see half red and half murderous.

"Are you sa..."

"Lily!" James hands grabbed her by the shoulders, "Let me talk, alright?"

"Fine!" She huffed, crossing her arms in front of her chest.

"Now, Madam Umbridge-Selwyn," James began slowly, and the use of the complete surname apparently appeased the pink dressed

woman, who was now displaying a small arrogant smirk on her face, "We are Harry's parents, as you too said, he was put under a Fidelius charm and hidden from us. We would like him back now...we are his real family."

"That is simply not possible Mr. Potter," Dolores replied with as much 'fake' sympathy as possible. "He has legally been adopted, and unless its adoptive family decides to renounce him, we cannot simply overrule their decision...the ministry prides itself in helping pureblooded family keep their traditions and privileges after all." The woman was speaking with such a bubbly tone that Lily's promise not to hex the woman was already reaching its limit. Maybe she could send a boggart her way...or curses. Lots of powerful and dark curses to turn her from a pink clad witch into a dark brown...

"Would it be possible to contact the family and tell them of the situation?" James began asking.

"That is indeed possible, Mr. Potter. Of course we cannot tell you their address or their name because of privacy concerns." Here Lily snorted, "But we can send them a message of yours. If you will address it to my new office at the Department for Minors Law Enforcement I will quickly send it through."

"Thank you so much, Madam Umbridge-Selwyn." James said with a bright smile as he began to walk away, pulling at Lily who wanted clearly not only to say more, but possibly also fling five to six jinxes the same way the old bat was now retreating towards.

"Calm down Lily." James whispered, as they left the ministry's halls, "Even if they don't tell Harry anything, we will see him at school soon enough."

"That's not soon enough!" Lily screeched, "You heard my sister and how she spoke about him 'little horrible freak' she called him! I'm...I'm scared she and that whale of a husband of hers might have even abused him! And now he's scared and alone and with strangers and...and..." In panic, Lily took deep breaths before finally blurting out, "We have to tell Dumbledore too." Lily's last words came out as whispers, "If...if there's anyone who can help, it's him."

"Alright...I'll floo call him when we get back home alright?" And with a quick nod from her head, the couple dis-apparated from the ministry.

Harry

The bed was comfortable. Warm, fluffy, and the furred sheets were a bright green color, slightly covered with...reptiles.

Alright. Harry's eyes were clearly deceiving him. There was no way snakes would be standing on his bed. There also was no way they could have managed to get to him by climbing from the window that was closed. There was just no way they could have entered from the door that was, once more, closed. They had to have come from somewhere, but the only thing open in his room was the bathroom's door and he was sure, bloody sure, there wasn't a window to the outside from there.

That wouldn't have been a problem per se, if it wasn't for the fact that Harry remembered just with whom he was sharing the house with. Lord Voldemort's servant Bellatrix Scamander was probably fond of reptiles...snakes were always portrayed as the evil guys and he had half a feeling this was no different.

He would have yelled, he really would have, but he didn't need to. The slithering mass of scales and fangs moved rushing towards the bathroom a few seconds afterwards, leaving not one of their peers behind.

Then the door of his room opened and Kreacher came in carrying a tray with tea and biscuits on it.

Harry knew that hallucinations were a part of a cracked mind, but really: he was keeping the invisible cloak on even as he changed clothes or as he washed...there was no way someone could have obliviated him again and made him worst.

Yet...either there had been a mass of snakes in his room or there hadn't.

If the second case, then it either was a hallucination or it wasn't. And if instead there had been snakes, then the question was, of

course...why the hell had snakes, of all things, decided to use his room as a 'nesting' area!?

"Master Harry sir must eat!" Kreacher exclaimed happily, "Mistress Bellatrix expects Master Harry ready in thirty minutes for training!" Harry ate mechanically, glad that Kreacher had been the one to bring up the breakfast, and was dressed as soon as possible.

He didn't bother washing...not with the doubt of the snake-mass ambushing him in the bathroom or with the fact that if he was actually going to train then he'd probably end up sweaty nevertheless afterwards. As it turned out, 'training' with Bellatrix involved grabbing the wand, this time with no Cerberus ready to pounce, and then doing his best 'duck' and 'dodge' skills to avoid the colored jet of lights.

The Bloody Baron had warned him the day after he had 'tumbled' Ron with the Cuspis Terrae. Some spells were meant to be kept secret, and used only when the death of the opponent was willed. While he had little doubts he'd actually cry if Bellatrix died, first he didn't know if he'd pull it off, and secondly he didn't want to end up in prison for murder if he actually managed the feat.

"The Bone Crushing hex is useful, two twirls and a smash movement and you can hear your opponent's screams all the way through a wall five inches thick...of course it also does crush some bones in the enemy's body...but it's the screams of the enemy that make it worthwhile to learn." Harry shivered at Bellatrix' words, before wheezing for air his entire body sweating terribly from the running and ducking.

"You need to go on the offensive Harry dear," now she was using the motherly tone, "Don't tell me you know nothing but pantry tricks? Come on...you can't have graduated with just a Leviosa now? At least a Flipendo? Surely you can throw something better!"

Harry didn't reply, merely panting for air and trying to look as beaten up as possible to avoid actually having to give an answer. Maybe the woman would let it drop...

"Of course, has to be Hogwarts." Bellatrix remarked, "Teach nothing better than stupid songs at the beginning of the year. Is the hat still thinking he's Elvis reborn?" Harry blinked. Elvis? Wasn't he a

muggle singer? Bellatrix didn't seem like the sort of person to listen to muggle music...so that left him with...

"Elvis Presley was a wizard!?"

"Was?" The woman retorted raising an eyebrow, "Still is I hope. Last I checked he was fighting another 'band' for first position in the Witches' Annual Top Hit Scores."

"Wait-A-Minute." Harry mumbled, raising his hands in a mock sort of 'calm down', "Did he also sing in the muggle world?"

"Yeah...it was a really dark period of his life, but thankfully it was over soon enough." Bellatrix commented, "Maybe I could get you a magic radio with recorded songs."

"Why not a music disk?" Harry asked, raising an eyebrow before suddenly cursing himself. "Oh right. Magic and technology." Wait.

He knew that Magic and Technology hated one another, but apparently he never even bothered to find out why. If a wand could freeze a computer...then could a supermarket's technology area destroy a spell? Could it choke a wizard to enter the MIT? That...that was quite a good enough question.

Maybe he'd need some form of electromagnetic wave to make it work...but really, why did technology have that effect on magic?

"Harry, am I to comprehend you have knowledge of muggle technology?" Bellatrix remarked offhandedly, looking at her wand with vivid interest.

"Well I'm a Starcraft player and..." He should have known. He should, in truth, have at least suspected.

"Crucio." And then he was on the ground, screaming as his entire body was wracked with pain. This pain was worse than blinding or scathing, because it held no origin. A broken bone hurt if moved and a wound hurt if pressed, this pain was all-encompassing and had no origin. He couldn't scratch it or soothe it and it hurt, it hurt so much he became raucous with his screams.

Then the pain stopped, and he breathed in with relief...before retching on the ground near him.

"Muggles are a filthy spawn, Harry. Their technology and their things are worthless and horrible." Bellatrix commented. But hadn't she said she would follow Voldemort even if he wasn't all that muggle hating? No...it... it made no sense.

"I have nothing personally against wizards, or half-breeds or the likes...those who have magic are fine. Those who don't and use 'technology' are worthless scum that should be burned to a pyre...alright?" She smiled when she said the last word.

"Y-Yes." He muttered, shaking slightly.

"Very good Harry!" She clapped her hands, "Now Accio!" And his wand slid from his hand and returned to Bellatrix' waiting palm. "And go and get cleaned will you? We have shopping to do after lunch!" She smiled, she waved, and she skimped back towards the house.

Harry merely trembled in shock and silence. Crucio was one of the Unforgivables, and now it was clear that the woman was completely mad. She couldn't erase his memory...but she could work well enough make up for it with pain.

With this he could try and get someone on his side. He could have her sent to Azkaban, but...but it probably wouldn't work. He also knew about the Dark Lord seemingly unscathed existence post that night...

This meant that Voldemort was still alive! How had he missed that little 'tidbit' of information till then!? Voldemort, the bane of Great Britain, was still alive!

How could...That was important. If he told Dumbledore...he'd be dead.

Dumbledore wanted him dead. At the very least, he'd stick with the facts.

Dumbledore had obliviated him repeatedly, to the point where Henry and Helena had to possess him throughout at least two months to keep him to his sanity. Even then, all that he had managed to obtain

was a slightly altered conception of his past that, in order to avoid massive headaches, he had decided to avoid even thinking about.

All that remained to him was to think about the present and the future, nothing else and nothing more. He couldn't trust Snape and he couldn't trust Bellatrix and he certainly couldn't trust Dumbledore or the Dark Lord...

It was simple, really. He knew the Bloody Baron's words weren't made for nothing: he could only trust himself.

But that...that was a bad path. There were thousands upon thousands of evil guys in literature and fantasy who by mistrusting everyone else had ended up on dark and bloody paths.

He had done as much unintentionally, by actually making Gryffindor look like the evil guys, destroying their earning and...basically setting them down with the sheer power of words.

He had to think. On one side, a Mussolini who had no qualms in killing him for fame and power and that subtly changed the laws to make them darker. On the other side a magical Hitler that had been 'framed' into evil and that had kept on its path to keep fighting the Mussolini.

If only there was some sort of Allied Force that could swoop in and save him...or at the very least bring him elsewhere. He couldn't choose Potter: it meant Dumbledore and Dumbledore meant death. He could at the very least 'survive' Voldemort's side for a bit...if anything, he was an Arian in the eyes of the magical Nazis, and as long as he didn't do anything, they wouldn't do anything in return...

He felt no better than the Vichy government...he felt as if he was betraying the French...but he would be spared. Life meant more than stupid things like 'ideals'. He wasn't in Gryffindor for the brave at heart. He was in Ravenclaw for the wits and the intelligence. He'd think and he'd plan.

If only life was simply set by strict rules...

If only.

Severus

"Mr. Snape," Isabella Rossi was all that an Italian grandmother could be. Crinkly, smiling and with a pair of small glasses on the tip of her eagle-like nose. Her hair was greyish and held back in a bun, and she had a small purse on her lap, as she sat in the cool shade of the Coliseum's secret wing. She was wearing a simple red shirt with frills on the hem of the neck, a dark black gown and wore a golden watch on her right wrist.

Severus had no doubts that the woman had earned her place as the new Headmistress of the Italians Universitatis...because she displayed such an amount of wrongness from her entire form that it didn't take much to feel that something was...different, that the elder was more than just an elderly lady who had sat down to take some rest.

"Signora (Madam) Rossi," Severus remarked curtly. "It is a pleasure to..."

"Stronzate (Bullshit)," the woman rolled her eyes, "Out with it child. You might have death far from your bones, but trust me when I tell you that every second counts."

Severus' eyes actually bulged unperceptively for a moment, before he quickly recollected himself behind his Occlumency shields. He should have known not to trust appearances, especially not when coming from a lady that was directly responsible for the hold of the Grappa frontline during the first World Wide war.

"I see." Severus commented, "Then I will get straight to the point: Albus Dumbledore is..."

"U' Ricchione? (The Gay?-Really Offensive term)" Severus, right about then, choked on his own spit.

"Madam!"

"Youngsters these days...so easy to ruffle their feathers." Isabella displayed a small smile, as she slowly inclined her head to the side. "I know why you were sent, ragazzo (boy), and the answer I can give you starts with an F. and ends with yourself."

"So there is no way for you to change your ideas on the curriculum?" Severus queried quickly, knowing all too well that the lady would just keep interrupting and sending crass comments, where he to try something else.

"The Dark Arts aren't evil, brat. It's the hand behind the wand that makes the choice. Fire will be defeated with fire, not with happy dances and giggling schoolgirls." Isabella narrowed her eyes, "And you can tell your Headmaster that what happened in Munchen will happen here too, if he dares to insist...I am not fond of bloodshed, but will not hesitate to strike."

That cue taken, Severus was out of there in an instant.

"How fun it is to rile up children, isn't it?" She asked to the shadows.

"Well, for old people boredom is a terrible threat, isn't it?" The Voice remarked drily.

"You're leading him on, aren't you?" Isabella asked back to the Voice.

"Or maybe I'm leading you on...who knows." The owner of the voice shrugged. "It is within my capabilities, isn't it?"

"Of course it is...fancy yourself some tea?"

"Please..." The voice rolled his eyes, "When you're in Italy, you go for the coffee."

"Well said." And with a quick nod, Isabella disappeared with the crack typical of Apparition. The Voice lingered if a second more, before doing the same thing.

Lillian

Diagon Alley was bustling with people. At present, Lillian was more worried about the fact that she had a brother, and that brother hated her guts.

What was more was that she had a twin brother, one who should always have her back, and she his, and that instead had worked his way into destroying her reputation at school. Now, she simply

dreaded going back to the sneers and the taunts...she still had nightmares about the chants.

"The cup to the scum!" they yelled. Sometimes she could see it, and then it even became worse: she saw Harry coming back home, and her getting forgotten. She saw her parents bringing Harry home, giving him her stuff and room, and then leaving her in a cupboard. She dreamed of nightmares where she ended up with a wizard hating family of muggles who would beat her and flog her, and sometimes she even dreamt of Harry having his revenge on her by killing her parents, their parents.

They were all stupid dreams, but...sometimes she just wished she hadn't been the girl who lived, but just Lillian Potter, sister to Harry Potter. They might have gone to school together, maybe ended up in Gryffindor together, and have a fun and happy life at school, carefree of everything.

Instead Voldemort had happened. He had kidnapped Harry, he had stolen their memories of him and he...he had made them ignore him throughout the first year.

Just why...why hadn't he talked to them? Why hadn't he come up with a reason to talk to them, to explain to them, to ask them why? He would have realized their parents hadn't really abandoned him, that it had been all lies.

Instead it had happened, and Harry was no longer reachable...there had been no reply from the ministry about who had adopted Harry, and negotiations appeared to be unavailable.

That was why she hoped to see him today, in Diagon Alley. She knew it was a stupid thought really: there were a lot of days of time to get the school supplies, but her parents had thought about it and with the date of adoption known...they'd apparated to Diagon Alley once a day to get something.

Sure, it meant being forced to walk through shops for the entire day, but she ended up having lunch with her mother and trying to calm the woman down from jumping at shadows or just slightly dark haired boys who resembled Harry.

Today was their second day of doing such a thing.

They had lunch, and now the two Potter girls were walking towards Madam Malkins for the robes, when her mother tensed slightly.

There, in the middle of the crowd, walking next to a raven haired woman, stood a dark haired boy with the crest of Hufflepuff on the back.

The blue and bronze colors on the hem of the robes however betrayed his Ravenclaw's 'allegiance' and Lillian knew, she knew before her mother could even mutter it...

"Harry!"

And with the scream, the crowd stilled to stare and watch.

Author's notes

...Yeah.

screams promising bloody murder are sent towards the Author by the angry readers

Now, little bit of answering:

I can't update faster than this! Really guys, I believe that daily updates ranging from 2000 to 5000 words are good enough right? (Sometimes even double updates a day) I'm not a machine! (Albeit some readers tend to disagree with that)

That said: yes, Newton as a ghost will of course appear (It's in the wiki, thus it can be used)

Now, when Isabella Rossi 'insults' Dumbledore by calling him with a dispregiative term, it's the character that does it, not the author. I hold no type of contempt on whatsoever love life decision one holds or goes with for his life, but Isabella Rossi is a little character who is portrayed as the stereotypical Italian grandmother. (My grandmother is nothing like that, to say.) She also gives some hints on who the Voice is.

If you can guess it before the voice actually reveals itself...

Then bravo and cookies?

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals 3

He hadn't heard his name being called. No. He had not heard his name being called. Bellatrix had stiffened next to him, before slowly starting to walk again. He mimicked her, as fast as possible, but certainly not because a familiar voice had called his name.

Who was he kidding? Of course someone had called his name and of course he knew who the voice belonged to. Still, he hoped Bellatrix had a solution, because he had absolutely no intention of stopping to talk with the Potters, and certainly not with...that woman.

She had made it pretty clear who his mother was, wasn't it?

He was being petty. He was being jealous. He knew he was acting like a spoiled kid who is found with his hands in the candy and is yelled at, but still refuses to admit it. He wanted to be recognized as his real mother's child of course, but he couldn't, he just couldn't stay and talk to the woman. He had no idea if she was about to offer him a place in her house as her sister's son or if she had finally remembered that he was her children too.

All that he knew was that he wanted to stall this as much as possible. Bellatrix took a sharp turn and he followed swiftly after.

"Harry! Harry please stop!" The woman kept on calling, but he didn't. If he did, it would be the Potters, then Dumbledore. He knew he had school, he knew he had to end up in Hogwarts again and face Dumbledore, but at Hogwarts...he wasn't alone.

Sure, all he had were the ghosts, but they could call for help. They could call for Draco and the other Slytherin who hailed him as King and they could do things and help him out. Strangely, Harry knew he would be safe at the heart of the enemy's fortress...but not at the outskirts. The gentle Mussolini wouldn't kill him where the press could see him, but would certainly exile him...and get someone else to fling the dagger down.

"Next to the right, grab my hand." Bellatrix hissed. Harry winced at the tone, but did just that. He felt a sharp pull, a tug, and the next moment they were within the store that sold the magic books.

"I hate family reunions." The raven haired woman replied, "So here." Handing him over the list of books to buy, "Get them and I'll wait for you outside...here's the money." Then, after handing him over a good amount of Gallons within a pouch, she walked out briskly. Harry knew better than to start complaining: he had the list and the money, he'd make do. Quickly his feet brought him over to the school books, where he stopped for a moment.

Of all the bloody days to get his stuff, not only did he have to meet with his family, but also with the Weasley's one that was apparently getting their books from the special sales and the second hand stalls within the shop. Normally, he wouldn't have stalled. He'd have gotten his stuff and left, but what if the Weasley knew who he really was, and they detained him? He couldn't let them find him now, could he?

He needed something to disappear from sight. Something he could wear to cover his face that didn't revolve around magic, because he was a...no.

He could use magic in Diagon Alley. Even if he was a minor, the area of the trace would be meaningless in the spot...but he didn't have his wand!

He was without his wand, and placed in such a tight situation that...

His inner breast pocket held both the Bezoar stone and Salazar's Slytherin pocket watch, but he did need something, anything, to get through with his book selection. If only the invisible cloak could actually make him invisible too, this wouldn't have been a problem! It wasn't as if he could walk backwards without attracting attention now, could he?

"Look mom! It's Gilderoy Lockhart!" One of the Weasley, a young girl who probably would start Hogwarts that year, exclaimed while looking in the opposite direction of his. At the same time, Draco of all people entered the shop together with his father, and when their eyes met, and then settled on the Weasleys, it was a split-second of understanding. The blond boy's eyes appeared to hold the eye bags typical of people who did not have a good night of sleep for at least a couple of weeks, and if possible, Draco was paler than usual.

Still, the Slytherin was next to him in less than two minutes, and with startled hisses pronounced some of the most contrite words ever to be spoken of.

"You could have told me your guardians had disowned you! We could have..."

"Draco? Is he a friend of yours?" Draco's father was hovering behind his child a moment later, but after his cold gaze settled on him for a moment, it left with a tint of a smile on the man's lips. "Of course."

"Father, this is Harry Dur..."

"Scamander." Harry replied quickly in a low voice. "I was adopted a month afterwards, Draco. Now I'm Harry Scamander."

"I know." Lucius replied with his smile now turning positively into a grin, "Bellatrix and I walked around the same...circles during our youth."

Oh right. Lucius Malfoy was one of the magical Nazi soldiers who had given the fault to their magical Hitler to get out of prison free of charge. Well, he had had to build a new hospital wing at St. Mungos, but no Azkaban had apparently kept the man sane enough...which couldn't be said the same for Bellatrix.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, sir...but I'm in a bit of a hurry and..." At that, Draco raised an eyebrow and Harry quickly muttered to explain.

"I'm cousin with Lillian Potter and her mother wants to adopt me." Which was probably true...at least to him it was. "And the Weasleys might know of this and detain me if I go over there to buy the second year books and since Bellatrix is probably waiting outside for me I have to be quick, but I don't know how to..."

"Say no more." Lucius cut Harry off before he could actually say anything else, and once his wand was out, a light touch on the boy's forehead made him transparent. "Wait here now."

And then Lucius was off.

"Is your father always..."

"He's trying to change." Draco mumbled with his eyes now suddenly downcast and looking to the side. "I'm sorry I didn't write to you sooner...when I did they just sent the letter back because you ended up getting adopted of all things..."

Harry merely shrugged, and then realized Draco probably couldn't see him, so he replied quickly.

"Not a problem...I couldn't write because it was a muggle neighborhood and flying owls would be suspicious. Did something happen?" Harry asked, taking into account just how much 'in pieces' Draco appeared to be.

The blond boy took a small breath, before whispering slowly.

"My...mother was hospitalized at the start of the summer...she's...well, still in St. Mungos..."

"I'm sorry." Harry replied. He knew better than to ask if she was going to get better soon: with the fact that she probably still was in the hospital, and coupled with Draco's complexion, it wasn't difficult to think about the worst.

"Don't. She just stressed herself and had a...a nervous attack of sorts. She's a bit unresponsive now but the worst is over. I'm just hoping she'll get better before school starts." Draco muttered, before sporting a light grin. "We're counting on you this year too King: will you give us the Quidditch cup I wonder?"

"Who knows..." Harry replied slowly, as he finally saw Lucius actually manage to get the Weasleys to move, pay and leave. The subtle combination of jabs and insults had apparently worked, and Harry bought his second year books with enough speed to make a Snitch look slow. He did however get the time to say thanks to both Draco and his father, because really... 'lifesavers' was the literal meaning of what they were.

What he hadn't thought about was the fact that the Weasleys might dally outside of the shop, and that Bellatrix might not get to him immediately. He slightly took a step out of the shop when the pair of red haired twins, Fred and George he last recalled, turned their head quickly to where he was and then gestured to both their father and younger brother.

He had been right. Lillian had told Ron who had apparently told his family, and this time Bellatrix appeared to have subtly disappeared for a moment. The result was that with the 'invisibility' charm gone, he was soon pressed too close to Ronald Weasley, who had apparently decided to jab his finger at him.

"You!" The red haired boy exclaimed with scorn, "I don't buy it one moment!"

"Ronald!" His mother's tone was harsh and stern, as the woman brought her hands on her hips to admonish her son. "You will leave Harry alone, you hear me!?" Then the boy was pushed aside as the red haired woman began to fret and mother-hen over him. "Poor dearie. That wicked, worthless, lurid..." the next set of insults and debaucheries was probably headed towards the Dark Lord. Actually now Harry was glad there was no Bellatrix nearby to hear.

"Horrendous monster kidnapped you and now...Oh you probably don't know what we're talking about..." No, Harry had a pretty clear idea they were talking about whoever had adopted him.

"Madam, I know perfectly well what we're talking about..." Harry began, only to be interrupted once more.

"Harry!" Oh for the love of the Zergs! Why was he on a first-name basis with people he considered complete strangers!? His eyes widened a moment in recognition of just who had yelled at him with his name: his father.

The man was apparently flustered from the run, and as a small silver animal he didn't recognize flew out of the tip of the man's wand he held little doubt his mother or sister would be next to arrive.

"Listen boy, I know this might seem shocking to you, but..." James was putting up his best calm and collected face, but was failing miserably: he was more on the anxious and worried expression.

"Harry dear, come over here!" Now Harry was getting positively murderous. Luckily, this time, it was Bellatrix. Only she was wearing a pair of thick sunglasses, a wide trimmed hat and a blond wig. The Hufflepuff's crest was quite visible on her robe's front, by the right side of her chest.

"And who are..." Ron's mother's voice died in her throat as she watched the sheer hurry Harry used in getting to the woman's side.

"I got everything." Harry muttered to Bellatrix. Kind of hoping they could now disappear or teleport away...but instead the woman had apparently other intentions. Gently putting her left arm around Harry's shoulder in an overly affectionate and motherly tone, she sweetly exclaimed.

"Harry dear, are these your friends?" Gesturing amicably towards the Weasleys while sporting a brief white teeth flash...that seemed positively predator-like.

"Madam, were you the one who adopted Harry?" James was the first to recollect from the shock, and swiftly walked in front of the woman while making a small bowing gesture. "I am Lord James Potter. I am Harry's Defense against the Dark Arts teacher and also...his father."

Harry gaped for a moment, shock probably visible on his face. So he...so they...they remembered him? Why? Why did they have to? Why couldn't they just keep on forgetting? He...He clenched his hands tightly against the bag that held his school books, his gaze going down on the ground instead of up to meet his father's one.

"Why...I would have thought he was a complete orphan, devoid of any living family. Might I ask why he was abandoned then?" The question was asked sweetly, but Harry knew better; he knew better than to simply take Bellatrix' words at face value, especially when she was using the sweet tone...and when she was smiling. Especially when she was smiling, the best solution was to apparently duck and run away.

"Now Madam, he wasn't abandoned...it's just that..."

"Harry!" And Harry groaned.

Why couldn't he have normality once more?

Dumbledore

"So Madam Rossi doesn't intend to see reason?" Albus queried, eying carefully his most trustworthy man. He knew what made the man tick and what he could use against him, and there was no need for veiled threats or manipulations. Severus would help him as long as he kept the Potters safe from the forces of the Dark Lord, and that much he knew. More than the Potters, however...as long as Lily was safe, then he would help. In the unfortunate event of their demise, then Albus would have to keep Lillian alive...and after having proclaimed her the Girl-Who-Lived, how difficult would it be to have her under guard from the ministry?

"Albus, she insulted you outright with terms I will not repeat. There is no way you'll be able to see eye to eye with her." Severus remarked, "I think I barely got out of there with my life."

"Isabella always had a remarkable aura around her, Severus...it's what made her fearsome indeed." Albus acknowledged his words with a light nod, before turning to look through some papers. "The new term will start soon enough. If possible, I would like you to teach Occlumency to Mr. Scamander."

"Occlumency?" Severus queried, "Why bother? You said you did a perfect job."

"Because better to be safe than sorry, Severus. Teaching him Occlumency would no doubt be helpful...especially if it's the wrong type of teaching." There was that narrowing of eyes on Severus' face that lasted only for an instant, but it was enough for the wizened old man to know his potion's master would do it...albeit with a bit of reluctance. It was useless to try and enter Severus' mind: the boy was a natural occlumence and he would certainly, at the very least, feel his intrusion. If he did that, then he'd lose the trust of an ally he couldn't lose...yet.

"I see." The man retorted, "Was Flamel satisfied with our guarding of the stone?"

Albus suddenly tensed, but even that lasted for less than a moment. His hands intertwined as the silver haired wizard slowly, deliberately slowly, muttered a single word.

"No."

"I see...will he do another?"

"No."

"Then..."

"Indeed Severus, Nicholas Flamel will die, as is in all human nature to die. With luck, his testament might leave something to Hogwarts, he and his wife did have little friends left...poor Scamander being one of them." Albus drily intoned, "Which brings us back to the boy's situation, Severus: I cannot stress it enough, the prophecy must not come to pass."

"What are you afraid of, Albus?" Severus commented offhandedly, "The child will bring the twilight of a world and the sunrise of another...he will conquer the Darkness."

"Only that I fear, justly, that the twilight will be the doom of our world Severus." Albus whispered, but mentally sighed in relief. Severus didn't know all of it. He didn't know just how close Harry was getting to completing the prerequisites...and if he ever did, then Albus would have to leave subtlety aside and kill the boy himself.

With Scamander's death, however...maybe Albus was getting a bit paranoid. How could that part of the prophecy come to pass with the man's departure from the living world?

Harry

Fortescue's Ice-cream parlor was packed with tension and people. Bellatrix was still acting as a doting mother, holding her arm around Harry's shoulder and smiling graciously. Lily Potter was apparently torn between yelling and keeping quiet. Lillian was looking at him as if he had grown a second head. James was trying a light nervous smile and Ron was the only one of the Weasley family who had apparently stayed with the Potters. Something about having to play Quidditch in the afternoon at the Potter's pitch and having less time to waste if he went with them directly. Of course it was more of a 'let's throw our nose where it doesn't belong'...at least that was Harry's opinion on the boy's presence.

"So." James began hesitantly, "As I explained, Harry does indeed have a family; one that would love nothing more than to see him happily back at home."

"I see." Bellatrix remarked with her smile, "Unfortunately Harry is my son now. I am his family, and his home is within the Scamander's cottage."

There was a moment of silence, before Lily finally snapped.

"You want to bring it to court then!? Fine you wh..."

"Lily!"

"Mom!"

Both James and Lillian were shocked by such a display of ferociousness, but it was probably normal after everything. Coming to terms with the fact that one's own son, one's own flesh and blood had been basically isolated and forgotten for at the very least eleven years was a harsh blow. Especially when someone else had begun to fill in the void...at least that was probably what Lily Potter was seeing, while Harry held little to no doubts he just wasn't going to get a caring and loving family ever.

He'd probably end up with dysfunctional Death Eaters singing their Heil Hitler songs or their hymns while trying to keep looking like a good little Arian.

Why couldn't he just yell? Why couldn't he just scream and tell his family that the woman wasn't being overly affectionate, but simply holding him 'hostage' by keeping up the subtle action of being able to disappear from there at her whim? Of course those three weren't his family to begin with.

"From what I heard and saw, he was abused during his early years of life." Bellatrix offhandedly commented. Harry's own blood froze. That wasn't possible. The Dursley had been anything but abusive. The most 'abuse' he had received had been a slap on the back of the head by Vernon, and even that had been amicable and related to his usual running down the stairs without even bothering to check if someone was coming out of the kitchen's door.

The fact that both Lily and James were apparently paling and buying the story...why was even Lillian looking at him with a sympathetic look? No! It was wrong! How could they...

"They called him a freak among other things. Flung him in a cupboard, did really horrible and scarring things. The last thing he needs is to be removed from a loving household and end up into one where he will be treated as the second best." That wasn't true!

None of that was true, why the hell didn't they understand the woman was lying...wait.

If they remembered him, then they had to have gone to the Dursley first. If they had met the Dursley, then they might have called him a 'freak'. Maybe. Maybe...maybe they really hadn't done anything bad to him in his youth, but after discovering he was a wizard they did abandon him. Or maybe they had done something horrible to him, but then Dumbledore had obliviated him of that.

He had obliviated him of all the pain so that he could feel the pain for his family leaving him. He had...had he forged all his memories?

Was this too going to be a forged memory?

Was he going to wake up tomorrow, without even knowing his memory had been forged? No. He had the pocket watch, he was safe.

He knew he was safe with the watch.

But what if it was a lie? What if...it didn't exist? What if the ghosts were liars and the watch was just a fancy watch, so that everyone could know what he was thinking and act accordingly?

What...what if this was just a ploy?

He felt lost.

He...He didn't know what to do.

"I would never treat him as second best!" Lily hotly replied, only for Bellatrix to quirk her lips in a tight smirk.

"Really? He wouldn't be known as the brother of the Girl-Who-Lived? I suppose you already have a room for him too? Or will you just convert the guest's room? What Harry needs is someone who can be there only for him. I am that someone, you are clearly not."

"Now madam, that's a bit excessive don't you think?" James replied, cutting in before Lily could possibly outright insult the woman, "If we bring this matter to court it is certain he will be assigned back to us: we are his real family after all. The Wizengamot..."

"Will do nothing." Bellatrix remarked. "As belonging to a noble house such as the Scamander immediately prevents any type of 'forced' adoption in order to avoid the theft of a line or its disappearance, you cannot legally claim Harry as yours, because he is now a Scamander, and will remain as such until I say otherwise...which I won't, because you are not what is best for Harry."

Mentally, Harry was adding 'But I, a fraulein magical Nazi with a penchant for torture is, and now excuse me but I must yell long life to Hitler or die from lack of fanaticism in my body'. Yes, that was probably what the woman was thinking. She was mad enough to think like that at least.

The last jibes at the Potter had probably struck them, but it was strangely Ron who had kept quiet till then that spoke once more.

"Bloody hell Harry! It's you they're talking about! Come on mate, wouldn't you rather go back to your real family?" And here Harry knew that Bellatrix had been slightly tensing with her hand around his shoulder. She was probably getting ready to Apparate back home if what he said was not to her liking...so he had to act smart enough.

Still there was something else in him. 'Mate'? How dared the Weasley call him mate when he had been accused of being what, the stealer of the philosopher's stone? What bloody damn git did the boy have to be, to still think he had any chance in speaking? This wasn't his business, and if his feral snarl showed anything...it was that Harry Scamander wasn't someone to call a 'Mate'.

"Shut your damn trap Weasley before I decide to tear your limbs apart." He hissed, before turning to his 'family' who was apparently shocked by his way of speaking. "I don't know you. I never knew you

and I'm not going to start now. I'm Harry Scamander and that's final." It wasn't hissing, but more of him being half-strangled by his emotions that made him forced to say the words out like that. "We can go." He added a moment afterwards, looking at Bellatrix who was positively smiling now.

"Well, you heard my son." The woman commented, giving the final jibe in the family's direction. "Have a nice day." And with that final, mocking salute, the two of them left the store. Harry hadn't even ordered an ice-cream actually.

Neither had Bellatrix, but he should have suspected it would have been kept a short thing.

They popped back in the Scamander's house, with Mauler seemingly jumping out of the way and meowing at them. Albeit he had half a feeling the cat was meowing only at him.

"You did well Harry," Bellatrix remarked, removing the colored hair and the thick sunglasses. "But you made a tiny mistake near the end." She remarked, and Harry saw the woman was holding her wand. "You know what it was?"

"I...I'm sorry." He muttered weakly.

"Oh well," the woman rolled her eyes, "At least you seem sad about it. But you haven't answered, so maybe you're sad about something else, uhm?"

"I shouldn't have said...those words?" He tried to be elusive. He didn't think he had done something bad; the woman had been smiling at him before they left, hadn't she?

"Too elusive Harry, tsk." The woman shook her head. "Oh well...can't have everything in life I suppose."

Then she pointed her wand at him and Harry whimpered.

"Please..."

"I know you don't really mean it unless you're suffering!" Bellatrix suddenly yelled angrily, "Crucio!"

Harry screamed. He screamed and he cried as his fingers clawed on the carpet and his body twisted and contorted. He tried to assume a fetal position and to stretch but the pain was unbearable. His nerves wracked themselves as if they wanted to be torn apart from his muscles and his bones, and he could feel his teeth cracking and his tongue swelling...even though it wasn't real.

Then it stopped, and Harry breathed in relief.

"I'm sorry...please...I'm sorry..." He babbled, tears running down his eyes.

"Good." Bellatrix remarked, "Now stand up and stop playing in the dirt Harry dear: you did really well today, and the Dark Lord would surely be pleased by how you handled that filthy blood traitor of a Weasley...so I'll make you my special stew tonight! Go and get washed before dinner...off you trot!" The motherly tone was back, the...the pleased motherly tone that any mother said to a well behaving children...and it made him sick.

And Harry ran.

He ran for upstairs, towards his room and inside his bathroom, and then he closed the door behind him.

He would have bolted it shut if only he had held a hammer and some nails.

The boy slowly fell on the bathroom tiles, his body trembling lightly from the after effects of the curse.

Why had he chosen this...this madness over his family? His real family?

Dumbledore would have killed him.

Dumbledore would have killed them.

Dumbledore might have killed him or them, but he hadn't wanted to risk it. So now he was suffering, his family believed he wanted nothing to do with them, and...and he was clearly too close to a psychopath that was apparently only waiting for something to push her over the edge.

"Friend?"

A voice called to him, but he didn't open his eyes. He kept himself huddled up in the corner, not even daring to whimper any louder than soft sobbing sounds.

"Hurt?"

The voice was at it again, it just felt so close to him, but...

"Who?" Now the voice was definitively angry. "Who!"

But he didn't answer. He knew better than to believe in a figment of his imagination. He knew better than to believe that someone could save him from this...this pain, this thing...he had been hallucinating, and now he was outright delirious.

The Crucio spell made people mad if abused upon...the pain was nerve wracking and worse...it hurt without leaving behind any trace of a wound. It gave no closure. When you broke a leg or a hand, then gradually the bone would set and you'd understand that the wound is gone.

Crucio gave no wounds visible...and those it gave deep within weren't so easy to close.

Tired from his ordeal, Harry Scamander fell asleep in the corner of the tiled bathroom, not knowing that somewhere and somehow...something was actually working for his benefit...

Basileus

"So...anagrams." The red haired teen Ravenclaw deadpanned, staring at the face that was both familiar to him and also dreadfully different from the last time he had looked at it.

"I say they bring forth a great venture of amusement in my bones." The face remarked with a dry chuckle, "And you must admit, it takes a genius to defeat a genius."

"I thought it took a hidden rogue to backstab a wizard and do the critical damage." Basileus commented, standing with his back

against the marble walls of the 'destroyed' Parthenon. Which in truth hadn't been destroyed...only placed under several 'Notice me not' charms and turned into the general headquarters for the Greek Wizard Supremacist movement.

"I do not know what you are talking about, Basileus." The old face supplied with an amused tone, "That you are not what you say you are is clear however."

"Oh well, you know me." The red haired teen shrugged, "Actually I think you do. When this...thing was blown up," gesturing to the intact Parthenon, for the wizards of course, "I believe I did do something around the area."

"But that's..."

"Avada Kedavra." And the face of an old white haired man fell down on the ground with a soft thud, while behind him a young Voldemort held his wand high in contempt.

"And who would you be?" The Dark Lord asked, "That you dare try and give orders in my name?"

"Tsk." Basileus remarked, "I am nothing but a chance, Tom." The old teen supplied, "May luck favor you." And then the figure was gone...and Tom Marvolo Riddle, known as Lord Voldemort, growled its frustration.

The boy had the nerves of harassing his own Death Eaters and enraging the general population against his ideals of blood purity...and he had no idea whom the boy worked for!

Madame Maxime

She was taking her tea with calm and serenity, her pinkie finger outside just like it was the proper etiquette to do. In front of her an extremely rude parent had just then decided he would not have his only son participate in the mixed classroom, and would instead leave Beauxbatons. She was halfway through the cup when the man finally finished ranting.

"And when I went to school here, these monsters weren't treated as students!" The man wore a very expensive suit, a properly trimmed

black mustache and a pair of fine golden glasses. He had a clear case of lack-of-hair, but he did sport a badly concealed wig to hide it.

"Oh?" The half-giant raised her right eyebrow. "I remember you, Mr. De Bernadette...I remember you very well indeed," Maxime commented drily, "I also remember those horrible charges on assault and rape you claimed having suffered from two half-Veelas during your times here."

"Those monsters charmed me with their horrendous 'Allure'," the man replied quickly, "I only got justice done."

"Indeed you have..." Maxime muttered, "A pity then." She murmured, "Because they clearly did not receive their justice...and it pains me to not even be able to be the one to grant it."

"What are you implying Headmistress? You're a conveniently hidden half-giant, 'big bones' as if!"

"No Mr. De Bernadette," Madame Maxime muttered curtly, "I am no longer hiding my heritage. The world needs to change...starting from people rotten as you. To not even come at the appointment I had so meticulously freed my schedule for...just how rude can you be?"

And with that chilling question, the door was bolted open before De Bernadette could reach his wand. A flash of light soon followed the man's death as it crumpled on the floor, turning to ashes within seconds.

The Voice flicked his wand back in his wrist, before making a small bowing motion towards Maxime.

"My dear, you are as beautiful as ever."

"Always the charmer." The Half-Giant giggled deeply, "Care to take away the ashes?"

"Of course, everything for my favorite enemy."

With a deep sigh of relief, Maxime brought back down her tea cup and looked at the remaining leafs within it. The dark leafs assumed a strange tube-like form that ended with spikes, sort of like a snake

with a crown atop of it. If it was a good or a bad divination, she didn't actually know...she never bought the idea that that course was effective...but the girls at her school did like to be able to predict their love life.

She shook her head slowly...Basilisks were extinct after all: there was no way one of them could mean anything, if portrayed within the bottom of her cup.

Author's notes

Ba-dum tss tss.

That said!

Beauxbatons appears as only female in the film, but the wiki notices how 'scattered' male students are visible in the books. Thus there are male and females.

Then we have some more madness Bellatrix related, some interesting theories on who the 'voice' is by the reviewers and a generally lurking underground movement that appears some sort of 'for the equity of all races' (Here's your communism guys!)

Which still doesn't answer the most important question of them all: Whose sides are these guys on!?

We will see I suppose.

And the stone was apparently stolen? Oh my! Who would have guessed.

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals 4

The days passed in a blur. Without external influence, Harry could easily follow a simple cycle of training with Bellatrix and eating coupled with some hours of book reading that did not, truly, warrant the use of the Crucio curse. One time Bellatrix even ruffled his hair motherly-like and told him a bedtime story. Sure, the story was about the prowess of a Dementor guard of Azkaban sucking out souls, and he couldn't sleep pretty well for that particular night...but it was a night story. He wasn't babied, heck...it was all if he wasn't tortured every day, but he knew the drill and as long as he followed it everything was fine.

He didn't dare go to Diagon Alley and apparently he couldn't, once more, write or be written to by owl because of some strange wards placed to avoid the animals from leaving the backyard. He was, basically, alone with the madwoman.

Hogwarts however was coming around soon, and Bellatrix was fidgety, even more than usual, as of recently. She was probably suspecting he'd talk to Dumbledore, and change sides in order to be protected. He couldn't even tell her he wasn't going to rattle her off because Dumbledore wanted him dead. Well, actually she had been the one to tell him about the situation with the man so why exactly was she fidgeting?

He knew better than to ask.

His birthday came around in complete silence and normality. Harry Scamander was now twelve years old, and no gifts of course were delivered to him. Probably the Nazis didn't celebrate birthdays as much as they celebrated the numbers of kills they made...or maybe Bellatrix simply hadn't deemed it necessary to make him a gift.

He was kind of worried however...he hadn't yet met his grandfather, and Bellatrix did anything but hint at him being in the house.

It was the night before his departure from the cottage that he finally realized why the woman was apparently fidgeting even more.

"I think it is safe to assume," Bellatrix began slowly, "That your grandfather is dead." She added quietly.

Harry blinked. Was he supposed to feel...sad? Sorry? The raven haired woman appeared contrite as she spoke, but considering she was mad it didn't surprise him. The next moment she would probably heartily laugh and say something funny.

"Well, that just makes me his successor and you the heir of house Scamander." Shrugging, the woman chuckled grimly. Well...now that did worry him. Not Bellatrix grimly laughing of course, to that he was already too much jaded to even care: he was starting to understand the thought pattern of the madwoman.

Walk with the stupid and become a stupid now was 'live with the mad and become mad' apparently.

"Aren't you going to say something?" The woman asked suddenly, after five minutes of complete silence, in which only the noise of her fork in the plate could be heard.

"I'm...sorry for your loss?" He whispered hesitantly. He knew this meant a Crucio. Even if she would smile at him, even if she would say that everything was fine, he had done a little mistake in not answering immediately. He just knew it. He was going to get a Crucio before the night was over. Depending on how grave the mistake was it would either last few atrocious seconds or even minutes. Bellatrix had once said she had tortured a man into insanity by holding it for three hours and twenty-seven minutes. The fact she had counted the time spent had sent shivers down Harry's spine.

"It's our loss, Harry. You just lost your grandfather; I know you want to act like a good, strong boy and not cry, but you should let the tears go now...Don't worry, you're still mommy's lovely little man." Bellatrix cooed with her bright smile that made Harry die inside. She wanted him to cry?

"I...I just don't think..." He slowly began, while dropping the knife and the fork on the table. If the Crucio session began and he was holding onto them, he wasn't much sure he'd manage not to hit himself with both while convulsing.

"Oh very well," the woman rolled her eyes, "Act all tough and cry later on the pillow right?" She winked at him. "Never show weakness. Ever. Good..." Harry cringed; he sensed the 'but'...which never came.

"Tomorrow you'll be going back to Hogwarts." His mother commented. "I spoke with Lucius...I expect your friendships to remain pure, and your contact with the Gryffindors to stay to a bare minimum." The woman added, "You will not like the consequences, should you decide to ignore my words."

"I understand." He whispered, looking at her with saddened eyes, only for her to do precisely the same back. Oh no, she wasn't that mad yet, was she?

"I'll miss you." The woman began to sob, before standing up from her seat and moving closer to him. "My little Harry." And then she hugged him tightly.

Awkwardly the boy patted her on the back, half-returning the hug. Maybe, just maybe, she wouldn't make him suffer through another Crucio curse this time around. She sniffled a moment, before conjuring a handkerchief to wipe away her tears, standing once more proudly up and ruffling his hair.

"You may go to bed now. I'll come by and tuck you in later," she then gave him a light peck on the forehead, and sent him on his way upstairs. It was just as he took the first step on the staircase, that he heard her say. "Oh my...I was nearly forgetting."

And then, of course, he heard that dreaded word once more.

"Crucio."

The next morning his right hand went through a couple of spasms as he grabbed his glasses from the bed desk next to him. Slowly, trembling not for the cold or the hour but for the pain, Harry wobbled towards the bathroom's door and then in front of the sink.

He looked like a mixture between a haunted ghost and a ghoul. Training with Bellatrix had removed the baby fat, and the cursing on his body had made him weary, his eyes looked worse than haunted: soulless. His hair was now loosely tied in a ponytail behind his back because there was just no frigging way he'd let Bellatrix near him with a pair of scissors.

Of the other changes in his physiques the most noticeable was his skin. Somehow, even by spending all that time outside in the sun, he had still managed to retain a pale skin. He was anything but a healthy twelve years old...he looked more like some sort of specter having risen from the tomb. Was this the effect of the Crucio? Or was it simply him being him?

The eyes in the mirror, however, flashed red for but an instant.

He blinked, rubbing his eyelids before looking again. No. They were his normal green color, as always. There was nothing strange with them.

He was fine.

Everything was fine.

Sure, he wouldn't be winning beauty contests, but he was fine.

He'd survive. He'd manage it...and then, he'd kill the bitch.

He'd probably cut her in pieces, torture her little by little and then devour her corpse just to be on the safe side. Harry gagged at the mental image, shaking his head repeatedly as he washed his face. Eating a human body? That was just...wrong. He wasn't a cannibal.

Maybe he'd just split her head with an axe. One of those war axes the goblins were so fond of using during their rebellions. Or maybe use a heavy mace and see how much a head has in common with a water melon. He could even hear it, the melodic 'splat' ringing in the back of his ears.

No. The splat was actually there. He quickly turned around, his eyes looking for the source of said squishy-sounding noise. From the top of the shower's cap a small green colored snake had apparently jumped down in the water of the bath, making the 'splash' sound that he had heard as 'splat'.

He was hallucinating badly if he managed to see snakes pass through holes smaller than them.

Maybe suffering a Crucio was like getting a concussion: he shouldn't have gone to sleep earlier. He should have stayed awake at least for

a couple of hours to make sure the after effects had all gone away...but he was in so much pain...he had just wanted to sleep it all away.

The snake however didn't seem to be simply going to disappear in nothingness this time around. It slithered its way out of the tub, and then began to move all the way up towards the sink, before comfortably resting in the pool of warm water Harry had been using to wash his face.

"You are a hallucination." Harry deadpanned.

The snake actually blinked once, before slowly moving its head to the side and finally replying.

"You are strange, human."

"Yep. Hallucinating early in the morning." Harry mumbled. "Listen...as much as I'd like to stay here and chat, I need to finish cleaning myself...I leave for Hogwarts and..."

"I know."

The one to blink was Harry now. On one side, the snake was actually holding a conversation with him. On the other side he knew better than to query whether a snake that could talk or not was actually a snake and not, let's say, a magical creature. Maybe it was a sort of mystical creature that resembled a snake, but wasn't one?

Like Machiavelli...who resembled a really ugly and fat chicken and instead was an apparent hybrid of an owl with really funny ancestry. Someone, one day, would have to explain to him just how that damn crossbreed had managed to make something...flight-able and flight-worthy.

"So...why are you here?" Harry asked carefully.

"My lord felt your pain: I am to be your guard." The snake hissed. "For you who bear the sign of Salazar Slytherin and are its descendant, know this: I am yours to command. Nothing you will order me to do can be wrong and nothing that is done against you can be right."

"And your lord is?" Harry was kind of wondering why the funny conversations had to happen always in the direst moments in his life...and for 'funny' he of course meant highly traumatic or outright creepy.

"The King of Snakes: the most humble familiar, heir of Slytherin."

Alright. This was just like asking someone 'What's your father's name?' and be answered with 'It contains vocal and consonants'.

He already had his usual way of dealing with these...things that kept on happening: he wouldn't be sane if he didn't have some way to keep himself on the right side of the lane called 'sanity' after all. So, with a quick nod and a shrug, he proceeded to mentally ignore the snake until after he was done with his bath. To him, the think that was resting in the sink was nothing more than some sort of plushy toy that had somehow been enchanted to talk.

Even though it was scaly, his fingers could trace all the muscles of the soft belly, and he knew without a doubt that it was actually tickling him with his tongue at the back of his ear. Apparently having a snake around his neck meant nothing to Bellatrix. Or...

Harry blinked. He could feel the snake on his skin, but...the Invisible cloak hid him?

So...it didn't hide him, or his clothes, but it could hide animals? Maybe the snake had entered a pocket of sorts, but he wasn't going to be querying the snake's ways...not when it was too close to his neck. He'd need a cage and he'd have to be sure not to lose him...

"Here is my loveable boy!" His mother greeted him down in the kitchen with a bright smile, but with red puffy eyes, "I'm so sorry for last night...I knew you deserved better than just a meager dinner!" She hugged him tightly, planting a firm kiss on his forehead before gesturing for him to sit down and have breakfast. Of course she wasn't sorry for the Crucio. She never was. She was sorry for not having cooked her personal stew-dinner of doom.

"We'll take the Floo and be at the platform 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$ in time. I expect you to sit with Slytherin or with pureblood Ravenclaw. Hufflepuffs are fine in a pinch if all other cars are filled and the only free spots

are Gryffindors..." Bellatrix began slowly to speak, as food appeared on his plate.

"How can that be healthy with no mice?" The snake hissed at the back of his head, making his neck hair rise from the tension. The woman couldn't have possibly heard the little voice of the snake now, could she? No, she was happily telling him what to do and what families were 'blood traitors' that should be forgotten.

"Protect." The voice that whispered in the back of his head wasn't that of the snake.

Alright. He had to calm down.

Apparently, he had someone speaking in the back of his head now. He had a snake comfortably across his back and neck, and he was doing his best to appear completely unfazed by Bellatrix' discussion on blood purity as he ate a breakfast snakes apparently deemed unhealthy.

"I don't actually want you to go," Bellatrix whined as they neared the fire pit, his trunk and stuff shrunk and in his pocket. "My precious child, out to face those nasty, barbaric muggleborns and blood traitors..." She whimpered lightly, as if she was really worried he'd end up fighting in the trenches and dying some sort of horrible death.

"I'll be fine mom..." Harry began slowly, "Draco and his friends will be there." He added a moment afterwards, earning himself a small smile from the raven haired woman. Mentally, he thanked the gods that Draco was on his side.

"I hope so...I'll have a word with Lucius later on." And then they were through the fire pit and within the smoky and noisy platform where the train 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$ departed usually. With luck, he'd manage to get in a compartment of the train without crossing either his family or anyone his mother would disapprove of.

As he waved goodbye to his...mother? No. Wait. Stop the horses. The feeling of dread pooled and intensified until he brought himself to physically push his way through the various compartments until he found one empty to sit down in.

He closed the door, placing his stuff in order, and then he bit his right hand hard.

That woman was not his mother.

That woman was as much as far from his mother as it could go.

His mother was...

His mother...

Who was his mother?

Petunia Dursley? The woman who had grown him with love and cared for him? Or Lily Potter? That apparently loved him and hadn't willingly abandoned him? And who was his father? Vernon Dursley or James Potter? Of James Potter he knew little to nothing, in the end the only things he had done during Defense against the Dark Arts had been to read the chapters ahead and do the homework. He had never taken the time to 'know' who his professor really was...or what he was like. Was he a funny professor? Or a demanding one? He only knew Vernon Dursley as a father, and that was all he'd need to know.

Vernon Dursley was his father. A bit overweight, a passion for reading the newspaper, an unhealthy liking for bacon and eggs, a high level of cholesterol his mother always chastised him for, and...and he knew the answer to the first question.

If Vernon Dursley was his father, then Petunia Dursley was his mother.

The rest didn't matter. No matter the magic, the ideas, the decisions of others...those two were his family, and he would not, under any circumstance, forget them. He'd do all in his power to remember them...and to make them proud.

The door of his compartment slid open, and Harry mentally held his tongue as Neville entered and sat down, uncomfortably looking out of the window without a word.

"Spy or hostage?" Harry asked after ten minutes of awkward silence.

"Eh? Ehm...Hello Harry, did you spend a nice summer?" Neville queried slowly.

Harry simply looked at him, before raising an eyebrow.

"They got Trevor, didn't they?"

Neville sighed, lowering his head and nodding slowly.

"I'm sorry: I'll try and get it back and all..." As Neville turned to stand, Harry rolled his eyes.

"Sit." The boy muttered, gesturing for the Hufflepuff to sit back down. "I suppose I can tell you of my summer. Next time, however...just ask for help if they take Trevor away again." Neville's eyes widened slightly, as the boy dumbly nodded.

"The Scamander's cottage is...well, in a word: fuzzy. There are carpets everywhere, and by everywhere, I mean that there isn't an inch of wood visible on the floor," Harry began talking, trying his best to keep his descriptions on to the animals he saw or the plants he read of and then knew where somewhere in the backyard. Not that he had gone further than the cobblestone square where they trained, what with Custos still slightly growling at him every now and then. Still, he knew there were quite a bit of plants and animals around, so he just hadn't specified he hadn't actually been there and watched the plants with his own eyes...but it wasn't worthy being mentioned.

"And well...my mother's a lot fussy and all..." Harry didn't keep much on the argument, instead slowly starting to drum on his knee with his fingers, "all in all...it was a new way to spend summer I suppose." He acknowledged with a small smile.

"How was your summer instead?" Neville began to babble after two minutes. He probably wasn't expecting the question. Maybe the boy had thought he'd just narrate his own summer and then ask the other boy to go and deliver it without coming back.

Neville was halfway through his summer, especially the part where his parents had taken him to visit his grandmother, when a dull thud hit their door.

Harry raised an eyebrow as Neville opened the door, only to get tackled by a green blur.

Trevor the toad, master of escape, and since that precise instant mentally called by Harry 'The Reborn Lupin', had apparently escaped its captors.

"Trevor?"

"CROAK."

"Neville...are you sure your toad is just a normal toad?" Harry murmured. "I mean...I have a not-so normal hybrid as an owl and a...magical snake back at home that can talk, but..."

"A snake that talks?" Neville blinked in awe, "Is it a Couatl?"

"A what?"

"A Couatl! They're usually Brazilian flying snakes that are used by the Brazilian wizards to bring forth the rains. They have multi-colored wings and all..."

"Oh...no. It's just...you know, a normal green scaled snake that talks."

"I am an honor guard of the King. My poison can kill an enemy in one blink of my eyes."

Alright. Harry was now positively tense. The snake just had to have said that, right? Not because the animal enjoyed him stressed out of course, no...it just wanted to warn him that if he just as 'nipped' his neck with its fangs it would kill him in a second. Oh joy, if this was the start of the school year, Harry held little faith on what the end would be like...

Outside, a yell of 'Hey' followed by some ruckus made Harry tense, but it lasted only for a couple of minutes, before the door opened a few moments later, and Draco was soon inside together with Vincent and Gregory. The blond boy sighed in relief at the sight of Neville with his toad on one side and Harry on the other.

"Good graciousness...I'm starting to think I should wring the Weasley's head." Draco muttered, sitting down next to Harry as Vincent and Gregory sat on the other side.

"How's the Bubotuber's plant, Draco?" Neville asked with interest, eliciting a startled groan from the Slytherin.

"Neville! We spoke of this during the last term! You need to know when some questions are not meant to be asked." The blond boy huffed, before turning to Harry. "Yes, I had acne. Yes, I used the..."

"Oi! Calm down." Harry exclaimed raising his hands in the usual gesture of 'calm down', "It's fine. Acne or not it doesn't matter."

The fact the boy sighed in relief meant nothing to Harry's brain. For the first few seconds at least...then he just began to dread. No, Harry decided, it was just embarrassment for having acne, clearly it wasn't as if the blond boy was...oh right, hero worship.

He was being worshipped as a hero following the last year. Probably. He didn't know, but judging by how Draco was apparently tense for the following seconds, giving him some worried side glances, it had to be something like that.

"So this year it's the Quidditch cup, right?" Gregory commented, "Last year loss of the cup was disconcerting, but after what you did to it...my father was actually proud of me." And the way the boy said that, with the small smile and all...it made Harry's heart slightly cringe. It was as if there was quite actually little that made Gregory's father proud. Considering that he and Vincent were used as 'bodyguards' with no brains and all brawls...

"Listen...this year, if we want to do anything, we will need a way to keep in contact." Harry began slowly, earning wary glances that went from him to Neville and back.

"Neville? I can trust you won't tell this to anyone else?" Harry asked slowly.

"You have my word." Neville practically said without flinching. Maybe it was the idea of being part of a conspiracy that inspired him to be a bit more forceful, or maybe he just didn't think he'd get out of the train car alive if he didn't.

Had to be the first one...clearly.

"What we did last year, we keep on doing this year too." Harry remarked, "But don't tell the first years...tell them it's something Slytherin have learned to do by themselves: in doing so, we guarantee that the following years will be pretty much the same."

"Why?" Gregory asked, puzzled at having to tell the young years to be 'genuinely' good probably.

"Because they're first years." Harry deadpanned, the lie coming smoothly to his lips, "If they were as smart as us, you'd be right...but they aren't. We don't know if they'd tattle to someone else...We know how Slytherin was treated the past years," at that the Slytherins in the compartment brought their eyes down, "But they? They won't. So they might think they can rattle it off with little to no consequence...and Gryffindors would love to know that." There were quick nods in the car, except from Neville who didn't understand half of it but simply listened in.

"Now, for the Quidditch...does anyone know if the Girl Who Lived is still going to participate?"

"I didn't see her on the train to begin with," Draco commented, "I think she won't...but then again she's your..." And the death glare, his own death glare, silenced Draco.

"She is either the Girl Who Lived or...something else." Harry growled lightly. "To not ever call her with that word."

Draco nodded as did Gregory and Vincent. Neville simply looked sideways uneasily, but didn't speak.

"Then I'll need to have more information...till then," Harry's eyes went to the outside, where the beauty of Scotland's green was dashing, "We proceed as usual. Warn the others."

With quick moves, the three Slytherin were out of the compartment, probably to go back to theirs, relate the plan and get changed in their robes. Neville instead remained.

"Neville," Harry muttered, "I hate stereotypes." The other boy's lips trembled lightly, but he still did not speak. "I know what you're thinking: he's turning dark, he's turning evil...he's a true monster who hides behind human skin..."

"No!" Neville exclaimed, "I mean...that's a bit harsh isn't it? I don't know what you're planning or what you planned...but it's harsh to call you a monster in human skin."

Harry smiled gently. Now...now he just had to repress the urge to use the boy. He clenched his hands and gritted his teeth.

"Neville...I'm going to be bluntly honest with you, alright?" The Hufflepuff nodded slowly, as the Ravenclaw instead began to speak.

"The first year happened by happenchance. I did not plan anything of the sorts...it just happened. I spoke with Draco and his friends once, and then they did all the rest...now I'm called 'King' and they expect me to lead Slytherin to greatness." Neville was queasy in his seat, but Harry wasn't done. "The problem is...that's not me." Now his voice was cracking, as he could feel tears of frustration coming out from his eyes. "I'm not an ultra-smart genius or an Overlord from Hell. I don't deal with minions and powerbases and I hate struggles...I just wanted Hogwarts to be a school like any other, where I could learn and do nothing more...but apparently that's not the case."

Now Neville was looking at him worriedly, but he had to finish speaking.

"Listen to me: I don't want goons, thralls or servants. I want friends. I want to be able to speak with someone else and to have another opinion. I want people I can trust with my secrets and who in turn can do the same thing." Neville was positively flustered, but Harry wasn't finished. He couldn't finish there because if he did, he'd be using Neville's sense of loyalty and 'Hufflepuff-ness'.

"I'm not a good guy, Neville. I'm not going to barge in and use my body to shield someone from harm. I'm not brave to stand when my neck's on the line and I'm not really that smart to be first in class in everything. I was average for most of my life and I doubt it will ever change. I just want a friend. If...If you want to go and tell Lillian and the others that I planned everything for the first year and I'm

planning something this year too...then you can go, really...I'll probably have to watch my back if you also tell Draco I'm not really some sort of evil overlord of doom and deceit but...I'm leaving you the choice." He finished, "I don't want to use you, or your sense of honor and loyalty...which is why I'm being perfectly frank with you when..."

Neville flinched, before slowly standing up and heading towards the door.

"I'm...I'm not really the most honest of the puffs, you know?" The boy commented as he stood by the door, "I...I lied back there, when I said my parents brought me to see my grandmother." The Hufflepuff reached for the compartment's door, "My parents are mad. They ended up becoming mad after being tortured by Bellatrix Scamander who was, supposedly, under the Dark Lord's Imperius spell." Neville trembled slightly, "I...I was there and I watched that woman torture my mother for three hours and twenty-seven minutes, the...the medi-wizard said that I should be proud of my mom, because she survived that much...but...she doesn't recognize me. She doesn't even recognize my father...who doesn't know me." The boy opened the door.

"I need time to think." And then Neville was out of the door.

And Harry was feeling a turmoil of emotions one darker than the other, coupled with embarrassment for having told Neville too much and with sheer insults flinging around his head at having mistakenly trusted Neville...precisely because of Stereotypes.

He had thought the boy was a naïve goody two shoes. He had thought he'd understand and he'd become his friend like that...He had decided to be honest in the hopes of getting a friend but...

But all he had gotten was a delusive answer.

Harry changed in his robes in silence, and as he walked out of the train, his steps took him towards the Thestral-moved carriages. He was about to climb when he saw the Thestral look at him, deeply, and then bow his head in a subtle movement. The death horse gestured with his head for him to mount on the carriage, and Harry hurried without giving it much thought.

Maybe they did it with everyone, but not many could see them and thus know about it.

Five minutes, and they were seated...far better than having to take the boats and pass by the moat-lake of the castle.

Neville wasn't looking at him, and apparently was silently gazing at his own plate...at least from what Harry could see.

The first years entered with order, the Hat sang its song and then the sorting began.

Lovegood Luna together with a certain Andrew and Rebecca ended up in Ravenclaw, while a certain Ginny Weasley was brought into...

Slytherin.

The following five seconds of silence from the Gryffindor table were deafening.

The look on Ron's face was...wasn't there.

Ronald Weasley and Lillian Potter weren't there, seated at the table. Hermione Granger was, fidgeting, in the corner and looking as perplexed and worried as everyone else. Then her gaze went to him, and for just an instant, Harry knew whose idea of kidnapping Trevor the Lupin Reborn had been of.

He smiled at her, sweetly making a light bowing motion with his head. If the girl thought of him as an evil overlord, then he'd do that.

He'd feign being evil with all his heart.

Just so he could prove her wrong.

It was with such devotion, that he did not realize his wand was slowly emitting light puffs of smoke that reached for the floor and disappeared within the cracks of the castle's floor.

Severus

He nearly had a heart attack.

No, he did have a heart attack, but it did not kill him.

The sheer idiocy of the two idiots in front of him was something that made him angry beyond any possible way to define it.

"The Whomping Willow is not some place to let a car crash!" Snape yelled at both of the kids, who apparently were looking chastised, but not enough.

"Lillian Potter, I expected better from you." Severus snarled, before turning to look at Ron, "But from a Weasley spawn I expected no less...your parents will be warned, of course. Sit here and don't move."

Having gestured for the two to stay in his office, he left in a hurry. He had half an idea of leaving them in his office for a good part of the night, but he knew better. So he walked in the hall just as the sorting ended and Dumbledore finished saying the few words that made no sense whatsoever, and with a triumphant march that had, in his head, the same musical soundtrack of Darth Vader's march, he exclaimed.

"Headmaster! Mr. Weasley and Miss. Potter decided that a car crash against the Whomping Willow was a smart idea this year around." For a moment, nobody spoke.

Then of course chaos erupted as yells and screams of 'bloody murder' and 'my daughter is going to hear me' swiftly followed whispered and then louder conversation among the tables.

Severus, instead, sat down and waited.

Two minutes later...a very flustered James Potter was told where his daughter was, since the man had charged blindly without even stopping to ask where the girl had been put.

Maybe his pranks weren't as vicious and cruel as those of the marauders...but at least they had all the class of Slytherin.

Now, if only he could understand why a Weasley was now sitting at the Slytherin table, with Slytherin colors on her...

He choked lightly on his dinner.

But he held no doubt, none whatsoever, that somehow, somewhere, a marauder had to be responsible.

He'd kill James Potter and Sirius Black painfully. And then, maybe, he'd kill Remus too.

That was how Severus spent the dinner of the entrance ceremony, planning carefully painful ways of killing the Marauders.

One more deadly than the other, of course.

Author's notes

And this is Hogwarts, Hog-Hogwarts!

And yes, Ginny is in Slytherin.

And someone speaks to Harry.

And ?apparently? Harry has a talking snake.

And Bellatrix is as mad as the maddest mad hatter.

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals 5

Ravenclaw tower was now looking positively livelier with the lack of notes all around and the students coming back to the familiar common room and dormitories. Of course Harry held little doubt it would last for more than a week, considering the remaining Ravenclaw students from last year, Basileus included, were going for the Newts with newly minted 'Owl' troops.

"We shall know no fear," Basileus was intoning to the Owl-corps, "We shall fear no knowledge."

The Owl-corps dutifully repeated said words, looking a bit squirmy as if they had been bestowed with an extremely important honor that could not and should not be taken lightly.

"We will learn all that we need," the now sixth year Basileus remarked, "And we will need all that we learn."

The Owl-corps nodded vividly, repeating the words, and then with a loud and cheerful scream, they went off to an early bed.

The first years looked around positively worried. Even the female prefect wasn't there, having disappeared somewhere out of the corridor. Lacking a prefect to turn to, it was like watching chickens strutting around not knowing what to do.

"First years?" Harry began, coughing lightly as he saw those shiny eyes looking at him with new found purpose. It was like giving a bone to a dog, only these dogs here were human and particularly sad looking. At least in his opinion they were sad. Sad looking and in need of having their hair ruffled.

"Right staircase for females and left for males." He began, "Names are on the tags outside of the bedrooms, be nice to one another and remember to always be polite when talking to your professor. If you need help...well, just ask around alright?"

There was a set of bobbing motions, and then the kids dutifully separated themselves and went to bed. They were probably excited and tired about it all. He was the one who would have wanted to cringe. The second year schedule was harsh and Wednesday? Wednesday was murder: double Potion, double Herbology, and

mixed with Transfiguration and Defense against the dark arts. Yet his day would start being ugly since Monday...

But September 1st 1992 was a Tuesday.

And the next day was a Wednesday.

He'd have to survive an entire morning plus most of the afternoon before confronting his father at the end of the lesson...because he had no doubt his father would confront him. He should have gone to be immediately, but he decided he'd rather sit on the comfortable sofa in front of Helena's portrait and wait.

"Young Raven, it is good to see you again." The portrait began slowly, before taking a deep breath. Just as the ghostly figure of the Grey Lady emerged from the portrait, so too did the 'Portrait Helena' disappear.

"Henry wouldn't admit it, but he was positively worried for you." The woman added.

"Why?" Harry asked, "It was just the orphanage...right?"

"That and Bellatrix," Helena commented on with a hint of anger briefly flashing by, "Newton Scamander is currently our new resident ghost...not that headmaster knows or should be brought up to know."

Harry actually felt guilty about not having told Helena all about it...he'd be getting around it, eventually. No. Actually he wouldn't have spoken of it at all. The boy sat there on the couch as the ghost hovered in front of him quietly, before finally taking a deep breath.

"Newton kept an eye out on you by remaining invisible...He was positively willing to snap Bellatrix neck by the end...but he couldn't, being a ghost." The Grey Lady moved her head to the side, "Now he's eagerly waiting to start his lessons on magical animals within the..." The female ghost stopped, eying towards the stairs of the female side for a moment.

A first year with blond hair had apparently decided not to go to sleep, and was slowly walking towards the common room's sofa and fire pit.

She was sheepishly holding on to a half-moldy teddy bear, and once she got there, she looked with a light frown all around her.

"There aren't Nargles here. You know why?" The first year asked, blinking lightly.

"Nargles?" Harry queried curiously.

"Nargles." The blond haired girl commented with a quick nod. "They are witty creatures that are generally rude to others."

"Uhm..." Harry mused, looking over towards the Grey Lady who was apparently in the process of tapping her chin with her ghostly right hand. "You can't really sleep on the sofa." He wasn't a prefect after all: he should just...let the girl...survive on her own?

"Are naps permitted?" She retorted quickly sitting on the sofa in question, and looking around for whatever could be used as a sheet.

"I think they are." Harry nodded slowly. He had expected the girl to curl up on the other side of the sofa and fall asleep with her back to the fire. He hadn't expected said girl to outright fall asleep with her face against his shoulder. Either she was the greatest fake sleeper of them all, or she was really dead tired.

The pleading gaze he sent to the Grey Lady did not work much, as the ghost in question just mouthed a 'later' and with a pair of smiling nods disappeared back into the painting.

"Do you wish for me to kill her?" Of course the talking snake had to awaken just that moment. He couldn't have kept quiet.

"No." Harry's reply was curt, but it delivered the point home that there wasn't going to be a dead body only because someone thought his shoulder was comfortable...and then the girl's head fell on one of his legs. Alright...Harry needed to think.

The next day was a Wednesday. He should be going to sleep. He should be gently nudging the blond haired girl to move and get back to her own bed. He should have...but truly, he was tired, and a quick nap wouldn't have hurt anyone...right?

The screams of the dying were such a wonderful melody! He was waltzing through the corpses with the unbearable scent of death and sweat being nothing more than primrose to his nose...it was a good day to die. The sun was high in the sky, the clouds pure white, and in front of him stood his mortal enemy: his mortal enemy who would die in the most horrible of ways.

"It pains me that it had to come to this." He muttered, "You were my best student, Merlin." Explosions roared around them, as Merlin, a disheveled looking guy with brown hair and a goatee raised his wand.

"I thought you could do no wrong, master." Merlin replied slowly, guilt clearly evident in his tone, "But they opened my eyes."

"Who did, Merlin?" He replied with an amused tone, "My enemies? Those whom you should have known would lie to you forever, if to put you against me?"

"I will not fall to your guiles, master. I will ask only once: surrender."

And he smiled. He smiled as his mind pronounced spells too terrifying to be said by human voice. He smiled as the spells' power tore through the battlefield. The time Merlin gave him was enough to give his army the upper hand, and even if he were to lose...

Excalibur would be stolen. King Arthur would die...and he would have the last laugh.

Harry's eyes opened with a jolt at the fact that someone was pinching his cheek.

It was still early in the morning, and Basileus was hovering over him with a bandana covering his forehead with the words 'Study or die' inscribed on it.

He was just glad there was no incriminating weight next to him. Had he really slept on the sofa?

"No, you're not off the hook." Basileus commented in a low whisper, "But I didn't think we'd be going from Notice-Me-Not charms to 'Snog-Me-Yes' this year." The red haired teen had his arms crossed,

and was lightly tapping with his right foot against the floor, while behind him the portrait of Helena was looking elsewhere, whistling a light tune.

"I..." Embarrassed and half intentioned to fling himself out of the window, Harry closed his mouth swiftly.

"On the first night of the second year no less..." Basileus sighed, "What is it? Hormonal storm starting up?"

"Uh?"

"Maybe it's the stress? You want to get all O's in your scores?"

"Eh?"

"A-I-O completes the vocal alphabet...ah, and also the epsilon is part of it too." Basileus remarked after a few seconds of simply staring at Harry. "In any event: I'm not going to remove points this time around. There aren't points to take to begin with so...but if this is repeated..." and the threat lingered and stayed there. "Anyway, good luck for this year's ploy." And with that, the red haired teen walked quickly away...probably to the library.

Harry wobbled on his feet and headed over to the male's side of the dormitories. Once more he found his bed and once more he collapsed upon it...only to be woken up five minutes later when the screech of a Rooster startled him and his roommates up.

"Bloody Rooster." Anthony, if he recalled correctly, exclaimed.

"Whose pet is it to begin with?" Michael remarked, standing up and stirring.

"I think it's one of the sixth years." The third student in the room muttered as slowly the rest of them walked out, probably for the bathroom.

Harry grumpily walked out too a few minutes later, and holding the lower back of his spine firmly he grumbled. The light pain he was feeling was clearly nothing compared to the Crucio, but the next night he'd be sleeping in the bed, no matter what would happen on this particular first day of lessons.

It was time for double potions. He made it a point to arrive fashionably on the clock, earning himself the last cauldron in the last corner, but at the same time avoiding becoming a chat objective of Ron, Hermione or Lillian. All three of them apparently wanted to talk to him, if his arrival coupled with their flighty staring at the door was of any indication...Neville, who turned out to be the one in the corner with whom he'd share the cauldron, said nothing to him.

Severus Snape strolled inside the class with his usual stern composure, before addressing them at large.

"This year, you who have so far survived your own idiocy," somehow, Harry thought the first few words were addressed to a particular 'brand' of students: those whose surnames were probably Potter and Weasley..."Will be introduced to some more complicated aspects of potion-making. I expect you all to learn and be prepared for the exams...Mr. Scamander! What is bat spleen useable for?"

"Poison of rotting teeth, blinding sickness and mild organ growth. Coupled with nettle and Puffer-Fish eyes it can make the swelling potion. There are least two-hundred thirty two possible combinations, of which one-thousand three different effects can be rendered depending on the other factors such as direction of spin and wand movement." Harry spoke even before he could control himself, and judging by the small smile sent his way, Snape was utterly pleased.

"Very well...twenty-five points to Ravenclaw...Is it correct to assume you have been reading the Encyclopedia de Potionatus?" Harry meekly nodded: it was one of the first books the Scamander's library held. It was a recount of every single potion ingredient and the list of which major potions and poisons could be made, coupled with the statistics inherent the numbers of uses and the likes. There were no instructions on making the actual potions, but it did explain what every single ingredient did...and bat spleen was at the 'b'.

"Good. Mr. Weasley, what is the best lunar phase needed to gather bat spleen?"

The red haired teen said nothing as Hermione's hand shot in the air swiftly.

"Mr. Scamander?"

"It's a trick question sir." Harry replied quickly, "Lunar phase doesn't affect living creatures."

"Ten points to Ravenclaw...since apparently stating the obvious on some people is an actual mental workout." The low snickering echoed through the entire dungeon, as Harry merely watched unfazed as Ron turned slight shades of varying scarlet. He didn't know why the potion professor was picking on the Weasley or why he was dishing out points to Ravenclaw and not usually to Slytherin, but he knew what was to probably come.

Eventually the man would ask him to remain behind, to answer some questions. Or maybe he'd just Obliviate him somehow, or bring him to Dumbledore...he'd have to leave quickly in order to avoid that.

"I am here..."

The hissing sound apparently came from the wall behind him, because he could now distinctively hear it. It couldn't just be that he had now passed from mental hallucinations to auditory ones now, could it?

"The King of Snakes, the humblest of familiars awaits you...I will take my leave now." And then Harry felt the distinctive sensation of a snake slithering down from his body, alongside his robes and all the way out of the door. That actually brought him up to another thought...he had taken a shower earlier, but there had been no snake around. Sure, he did tend to bath with the invisible cloak on, considering it was both magical and charmed to not get soggy with water, but...did the snake simply decide when to make his own 'weight' known?

Nobody noticed him leave however, and maybe that was a little bit of grace fate had decided to bestow upon him.

The double hours of potion passed with doing experiments in stewing ingredients, which was relatively easy considering Neville didn't talk and was now apparently able to read. It was as the lesson finished and Harry turned to leave, that the Hufflepuff finally gathered the courage to speak.

"Harry...Are you walking on the footsteps of the others near you?" The question made apparently no sense, but Harry knew better.

"No." He replied curtly, "I walk and the others follow, Neville." The boy said nothing in reply, and Harry swiftly left before the Gryffindor trio could intercept him. Transfiguration was next; he'd just have to reach it before...

"Harry!" Lillian exclaimed, literally running towards him and nearly tackling him on the ground halfway through.

"What do you want?" Harry retorted hotly, pulling his robes away from the girl's grasp. As she turned to stare at her, he realized just how different the two of them were: she was tanned and with the baby fat still there, her hazel eyes were still there, but she had cut her hair short casket-like, probably for Quidditch reasons.

She recoiled ever so slightly, before pulling herself back together and gathering enough courage to speak.

"I just wanted to know..." She began softly, "Is it true? Are you really my brother?"

"No. I was born from the deepest pits of darkness and death." Harry retorted hotly, "Only to make your life a living hell."

"Harry, calm down." Neville was strangely at his side now; the boy had probably walked fast to catch up with him, "You're making a fuss."

"Me? I'm not the one who has to kidnap a toad to get some information out." Harry commented, his eyes aiming straight at the Granger girl who eeped backwards, "Or who has to put his nose where it doesn't belong." He added, this time looking straight ahead at Ron. "Leave me alone, and stop asking stupid questions."

With that he turned and began to walk away from the trio, soon shadowed by the Hufflepuff who apparently had decided to follow him to talk.

"Wasn't that a bit excessive?" Neville's question was met with a deep silence, before Harry decided to whisper back in reply.

"If I associate with them, if I even talk to them...I'll pay for it when I get back home, Neville." The boy whispered, looking at the Hufflepuff while clenching his fist, "I...I can't."

"Wh...Why don't you say something to Dumbledore?" Neville queried, "He could help you."

"No. He...He's the reason I'd rather be with Bellatrix than the Potters, Neville. Why do you think I don't want anything to do with them?" He whispered back, "Dumbledore...he's bad, Neville. Just like Voldemort." The boy shivered slightly, but kept walking ahead.

"You have proof?"

"I can't tell you. Not unless you know how to keep people out of your head." Harry muttered, before shaking his head. "You decided?" He finally asked, as they were nearing the Transfiguration classroom.

"I...I think if you don't trust Dumbledore...maybe my grandmother could," and then Neville stopped, "No, scratch that. What's your plan?"

"Survive." Harry replied with a small smile, "And get out of here with enough power to stand on my own." He added with an afterthought. "Nothing more."

"No ambitions, huh?" Neville replied in a low murmur, "That's...unexpected."

"Yeah," Harry snorted, "Let me guess: you thought I wanted to conquer the world?"

"Well...kind of." The boy replied embarrassedly, "Better that way: I'd make a horrible friend for a World Ruler."

Harry smiled a bit more, before nodding slowly.

Transfiguration held little surprises, except for bunnies being transmuted into slippers. Actually...he wouldn't slip in a pair of bunny-slippers even if they paid him, because if you left the things on your feet when they transformed back...Harry shivered.

He shivered as the woman asked a couple of questions around while handing out points, but most of all he began to tremble with cold as he ate lunch, and by the time they moved out towards Herbology he was positively freezing. It couldn't be that cold yet, since it was barely the second of September, and still he was shivering and thinking about getting warmer clothes from his trunk...

It was like there was some sort of freezing wind that was trying, somehow, to pass through his entire body. His teeth began to clatter one against the other as his skin turned paler and paler. He was halfway towards the greenhouses, with Neville in tow silently, when he fell down on the ground too cold to even move.

Draco

So Harry was actually befriending a pureblood Hufflepuff. Draco wasn't being jealous of course. Jealousy was unbecoming of him. He knew his friend had to keep up the appearances of not being involved, but he couldn't help but feel those slight fits of anger bursting through his chest. He knew this was just...misdirection, he knew Harry wouldn't do something like that but...

But then Harry fell on the ground trembling, his entire body pale and quaking with shivers and Draco cared far less for misdirection and far more for the boy.

Neville was positively scared out of his wits, but he was a Hufflepuff: keeping calm wasn't their primary specialty. Getting scared and running around like headless chickens was more of their work. He was hurrying close to him together with Gregory and Vincent, before he even realized what he was doing. If he did help the boy, then the plans of him being kept in the shadows would be outdone. If he didn't...hell, he was genuinely befriending Harry.

That meant he wasn't a tool.

That meant he didn't care about blowing away his cover to save him.

And maybe his father would even be glad.

"Bring him to the infirmary Gregory, Vincent!" Draco ordered snapping his fingers as the two bodyguards of his obeyed the order without delaying. They would probably have done it nevertheless,

and that actually went a far way in displaying just how much Harry meant to the Slytherin of Hogwarts.

Whoever had cursed their King would suffer hell, of that much Draco would make sure...and he'd probably participate too.

The Longbottom was looking at him as if he had grown a second head, and Draco couldn't help it, really: he sneered at the boy.

"Did you see who cursed him?" The Hufflepuff, of course, had to shake his head. The blond haired boy barely repressed the need to howl out in anger, and instead angrily stomped his way towards the greenhouse. Madame Sprout would understand or he would make her understand: he wouldn't be cutting plants with the King sick and a curser around.

Mentally, he hoped either Gregory or Vincent would remember to ask what had happened, and who the primary suspect was, but while in doubt, he'd take it out on the Gryffindors...had to be one of them of course.

Pomfrey

Madame Pomfrey was an understanding woman; stern, apparently hard to please, but understanding and fair. She had been there for Hogwarts for decades now, and at her passing it was wholly possible that she'd pass on the mantle of head nurse to her, Madam Potter.

Yet now she knew she had to choose whether to have the red haired woman in question know or not that her biological son had apparently begun, once more, to visit her infirmary. He had been practically a guest during the first year, and now it was quite seemingly starting again.

This time it was a curse that lowered the body temperature down on a person until it reached a nearly hypothermic point. Next time she just hoped it wouldn't escalate to a Crucio.

There was a great deal of animosity between the various houses of Hogwarts, especially between Gryffindors and the others. Once, all that she had to treat were a couple of Slytherin a year, the unlucky ones who got the bad side of the Weasley twins pranks or of some

other twat of another house. This year, she just hoped it would remain like that, if with no casualties at all.

Starting on the infirmary on the first day of lesson however wasn't something Madam Pomfrey liked to have, and thus she decided that, in reason of fairness, she'd warn both the Headmaster and the Deputy Headmistress. They'd decide what to do from there.

Of course she also compiled and sent a letter to the boy's adoptive mother, because it was indicated within school regulation that any and all reasons for a student to enter the infirmary would warrant the need for the family to be warned of it.

So the owl had already been sent, and Madam Pomfrey was once more heading towards the infirmary, when she saw something strange out of the corner of her eyes. It reflected against the metallic glint of the armor, and then it was no more. Strange...and what was that hissing sound now?

Harry

"Curse...them...who...dares...I will...kill them..."

He felt a light weight on his chest, soon followed by the familiar hissing noise of his snake.

"Heir of Salazar, I am deeply sorry. My task was to protect you and I failed. Punish me as you see fit." The snake hissed slowly in front of him, as Harry blinked his eyes open blearily.

"What hit me?" He asked groggily, half expecting someone to answer him.

"A curse the nurse lady said. To freeze your blood and painfully send you to your death."

"Who?"

"I do not know Heir of Salazar: I am ready for my punishment." The snake's voice was kind of sorrowful, as much as a voice made of hisses could be. It was kind of nasal and funnier than not, but it still held that underlying tone of lingering sadness.

"Melodramatic." Harry mumbled. "I'm fine..." There was no need to punish the snake...he knew all too well what actually warranted a punishment and what not, and he held little doubt he would ever punish someone. The pain he felt during the summer was enough to acknowledge that he would never submit anyone else to his own level of suffering. Still the snake was slithering all over his chest in wait, coiled and ready to suffer with its head downcast.

"No punishment. You learned your lesson enough." Harry decided, "Just avoid it repeating, alright?"

"Yes Heir of Salazar, you are most kind."

Then the snake slithered quickly within his invisible cloak, disappearing from the sight and letting his own weight be undone. He'd have to ask how the reptile managed that last part though...it could be quite useful.

After a few moments, the door of the infirmary opened, as a figure strolled inside. She was wearing the nurse outfit, and her red hair was cropped at the back of her head while her green eyes were frantically looking around the beds, until they settled on him.

Lily Potter was over by his side a moment later, tears running down her cheeks.

"Who did this? Harry please, tell me...Was it a Slytherin? Were you cursed back at the Scamanders? Are they torturing you? Are you in pain? Are..." She kept on blabbering for a while, with Harry shell-shocked from the sheer amount of questions to even be able to answer one of them.

At least now he knew where Lillian got her attitude from. He turned his gaze to the other side while refusing to answer even a single question...it would be for the best not to give an inch at all, to just...keep the cut clean. That wasn't his mother and she shouldn't fuss over him. His mother was Petunia. Yet he couldn't help but feel the pain in doing so. He had always dreamed that his real parents hadn't died. He had always dreamed to see them smiling and welcoming him back, that they had just lost their memory and hadn't really died. Yet now...now he knew how stupid he had been.

He knew the pain he felt was nothing compared to what was to come later on...he had clearly made a mistake somewhere, and Bellatrix would make him pay...he knew of it.

"Not even after lunch, and already in the infirmary." A cold voice clipped in from the door, as Bellatrix Scamander walked in, "I mean, Harry dear..." And then the woman stopped at the sight of the nurse.

"How is my son doing?" Bellatrix queried, suddenly perking up and moving with a bright smile to the other side of Harry's bed. The fact she had stressed the 'my son' part was pretty clear. "And what precisely happened?"

"M...Harry," Lily muttered after a moment, "Was the subject of a freezing curse: we are now investigating the matter. I was just asking him when he began to feel chilly, to pinpoint a possible hour."

"Of course you were...are you always that sentimental with the sons of others?" Bellatrix remarked offhandedly, "In any case...how could you let something happen to my wonderful son? Shouldn't Hogwarts be the safest school possible?" The woman had even the strength of will to actually 'flutter' her eyelids, while at the same time grabbing Harry's hand in a gentle hold and bringing it close to her chest, "Don't worry, mom's here for you Harry." Positively mad. The woman was definitively mad.

"Yes." Lily muttered, mumbling something that sounded something like 'crab-stopper' but didn't make much sense. "Harry?"

"During Transfiguration." Harry replied slowly, "I was in one of the middle rows so..."

"Do you remember who was behind you? Or next to you?" Lily asked again.

"No." Harry was quick in his reply this time. He still didn't know if Neville would end up being one of his 'acceptable' friends or not. He didn't know if the boy was a pureblood or not and frankly he didn't care...but he didn't want his moth...Bellatrix, to know if he could avoid it.

"Harry, if you are hiding secrets from me I will find out." The raven haired woman said sweetly, "And then you won't like your

punishment." She sing-sung with a bright pearly white smile...Harry's fists clenched unintentionally, thus tightening his grip on Bellatrix's hand: she did have warm hands though.

"I'm not hiding anything mom." Harry replied quietly, while mentally he could pretty much hear the cracking and destroyed heart of Lily Potter giving way as the red haired woman was paling and trembling slightly after his words. "Really."

Bellatrix merely smiled, before giving him a quick peck on the forehead.

"Good boy...look forward to Christmas!" She exclaimed while winking towards the boy, before turning to look at the nurse with a bright smile.

"Take good care of him, alright?" And with those words said, without even waiting for a reply, the witch left the room leaving behind a lips-trembling Lily and a silently awkward feeling Harry.

"I...I'll go check with Madam Pomfrey," Lily whispered, her voice clearly broken from emotional turmoil as she slowly walked out too. Harry closed his eyes once more, taking a deep breath to avoid having a heart attack. The bed sheets were white and clean, and they did kind of smell like lavender, yet he didn't feel all that comfortable in there. It wasn't safe enough. He needed somewhere he could be safe enough to sleep. Somewhere possibly hidden from sight to the others, someplace good enough for him, kind of like an invisibility cloak, only tailored for his sleeping needs...an Invisibility bed.

Not that he could have one or make one, but as he slowly got on his feet, he exhaled and inhaled quietly. He was still dressed, probably removing the curse hadn't taken all that long of a time, and the sun was still pretty much high now.

He could go to Herbology now, couldn't he? And later on he could do Defense against the Dark Arts...but he had no intention of.

He still needed to meet with Henry, with Newton and the likes and...what a stupid boy he was! The room of requirements!

He carefully inched out of there, glad that the few people around hadn't known whether he had been jinxed or not, and by the time he reached the seventh floor he was positive no-one was following him. Well, except for Mrs. Norris who was meowing at him by his legs, apparently wanting to be petted and purring in pleasure once Harry held her with his arms.

He felt so much like one of James Bond's evil guys that the only thing missing was an eye patch, an evil plan, an extremely evil monologue and a comfortable looking turn-around chair. He walked three times in front of the tapestry of dancing trolls, and once inside, he blinked to a halt.

There wasn't the usual room he used to study in, or a room with beds. Sure, he had wanted a safe place where he could sleep in peace, but he hadn't expected...a sewer?

The water did not reach him as he took hesitant steps upon a stone surface, while all around him statues of an old bearded man looked at him, vaguely reminiscing him of how peculiarly familiar that man was to...to who?

He blinked slightly as the door closed behind him with a sound clack, transforming into the stone wall from which he had come. Slowly, ever so slowly, the mouth of the statue in front of him lowered its jaw and something...something slithered out of it.

"Master arrived...The Heir of Salazar is here..." The snake was...the...the thing was...it was enormous. It was like watching an Arbok from the pokemon series, only it didn't have those strange side things and it was even bigger. Harry looked at the thing with shock, surprise and fear...and the thing looked back at him.

The yellow eyes washed over him with soft warmth, but as he blinked and took a deep breath, he spoke back.

"You're...You're a basilisk!" He exclaimed, as the giant snake merely coiled around itself, its head nestled atop his spires while his tail swished the air around...just like a dog happily welcoming its master back home.

"Master! I am yours to command! Let us cleanse this school from the pathetic filth that has occupied it! Let us bring forth a new era! One of death for those of worthless blood!"

Oh shit.

The basilisk belonged to the magical Hitler party.

He was screwed.

Author's notes

Cliffhanger. Once more.

Now, as for why Harry can sustain the Basilisk' gaze: first off, if it was Salazar's familiar, then it either has some sort of magic by which it cannot harm its master, or Salazar had some object to shield it from him. (Harry does have the pocket watch), it is probable that Tom held the same thing however, as I doubt it that when you go exploring a sewer you don't actually look at where you're walking and just kind of, you know, keep your eyes closed and yell 'ehi mystical familiar! You there!?'

So the heirs of Salazar are either immune, OR the Basilisk can turn off the 'death' rays of its eyes.

Which is kind of obvious. Because in retrospect would you enjoy turning to stone because of your own eyes?

(or being immune to it, like a snake's own poison)

That said, 'of course', why Ginny is a Slytherin will be shown later on.

Who cursed Harry ties directly with the 'main' plot of the second 'book'.

And I just broke Lily's heart, I know.

Now, as for 'Luna's' actions on the first night, it ties into the girl being some sort of whacked up seer and similar, there is NO pairing intended as of yet. And as always (if anyone ever read another of my stories) I usually refrain until the characters are of age OR the chapter has reached count 28 before even thinking about it. (in this

case, it's definitively the former: wait until of 'age' (fourth/fifth) and thus nothing done before that time can be considered 'romantic' as it should be considered 'plot related'. I do not dig slash or Yaoi (everyone has its own tastes, mind you, and mine aren't those) so even if Draco appears on the verge of going, you know, on the other side...it's plot related, and definitively not homosexual.

That's all in these notes.

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals 6

The snake's bright yellow eyes looked at him with a look that reminded him of a puppy. A giant, scaly puppy with sharp poisonous fangs and deadly eyes, with a tongue that hissed words out as big as at least a man...and muscles able to coil and strike with a strength equal to that of a tank...at least, that was what Harry was thinking about when he compared the Basilisk to a puppy.

"Whatsgoingon," Harry blurted out fast, too scared to even...wait.

"I am happy Master, you remembered my name!" No. Just...no. He hadn't called the Basilisk Watson had he?

He...This...No...It...

Harry looked around befuddled and in disbelief. You just don't call a basilisk as big as a house with the name of Sherlock Holmes partner! Just what part of the Basilisk screamed 'Yeah, call me Watson'!? The part about the high grade of mortality upon confrontation? The fact that it was a magical creature, a banned species, or what?

Watson.

He had called the basilisk Watson. Well, technically, his name should have been 'What is going on'...but he wasn't going to point it out.

"Do not be afraid, Master." The basilisk hissed, "You are safe here. I will protect you for as long as I draw breath." Oh, so that was why the room of requirement dumped him in the sewer area. Of course...it was because of the basilisk which would safeguard him. It actually was a smart idea: who'd be so stupid as to fight a basilisk?

"Master is tired. Master should sleep." He was starting to hear a little subtle tone beneath the creature's normal hissing noise. Some sort of light tingling sensation of calm and soothing that...that just made him safe and sleepy. Carefully he looked around for where he could actually sleep, before the slithering beast lounged forward, making Harry jump back in fright as it carefully submerged itself beneath the water to the sides of the stone bridge.

It was with the same sound a sink makes once the tap is uncorked, that the water level began to drastically lower itself down. Soon, the face of Salazar became attached to a statue, a statue that apparently reached way down to the bottom. Once the last drop of water disappeared from the room, Harry felt his entire body frizzle as if someone had magically turned on some sort of air conditioning. The warmth propagated throughout the entire room, as the stone walls dried up and colored themselves of a healthy green and silver tint, with wallpapers sprouting and bearing the symbol of the golden H of Hogwarts.

To the sides of the stone bridge upon which he was, and that he had mistaken for just a floor, stairs made out of black marble suddenly grew right out, granting him a way downwards, into the depth that now were brightly visible through deep green lights.

Carefully he stepped down one of the two circular staircases that led downwards, holding his right hand against the safeguard made of silver. The basilisk was down below, happily humming a hissed tone as it rolled around itself within a comfortably looking cot within a wall, so that only its head would be visible.

"Master is back and everything's warm again! Master is back!" The snake was apparently positively happy, if possible he looked like a mixture of Smeagle and a house elf...if only in the body of a giant snake.

"Why didn't you do this before?" Harry asked, as his feet ended up on a soft lush carpet that figured a bright green forest.

"Only with master can this happen! No master, no magic! No magic, no warmth!" So...the poor thing, no. The thing was a Basilisk. Calling it 'poor thing' was like taking the 'Hagrid' route and deeming a Cerberus a nice fluffy animal, or a dragon some 'cute thing' to care for. Speaking of Hagrid...he'd probably have a fit and start cooing at the sight of this. If he didn't die of course because of its eyes...or because apparently this was a Nazi snake...Harry kind of wondered if Hitler would have lost the war with a Nazi giant snake fighting with him on the battlefield. He kind of imagined him draped with the Swastika and charging through the allied lines while Hitler was riding him, wielding some sort of flaming sword of 'Arian purity' or a thing

like that. He shook his head from the day-dream. He had to try and be diplomatic with the Nazism snake.

"I see..." The place wasn't bad at all, for having been apparently 'submerged' for decades if not centuries. There was a comfortable fire pit that was now crackling, paintings on the wall that did not move, a shelf filled with books that were written in a strange runic-like tongue, a couple of comfortable armchairs and...a radio?

"Why would there be a radio down here?" Harry mused out loud, moving slowly closer to it with a curious look. If this was Salazar's place, and Salazar had lived thousands of year before...then what was a radio doing down there of all the things?

"Fawkes, have you seen where Mr. Scamander has gone?" The voice of Albus cracked through the radio, making Harry jump backwards.

"What? You have not? You cannot find him, can you? He must be in the room of requirements then...I will place a charm on it soon, I cannot allow him to be untraceable like this." Harry clenched his fists quietly as the radio kept on delivering the voices of the Headmaster's mumbles. For a while then there was nothing more than the light scribbling sound of a quill on paper, before there was a surprised sound, soon followed by the stampeding of feet entering the office.

"Headmaster!" It was Lily's voice coming through the radio, "Harry is no longer in the infirmary!"

"Madam Potter," Albus replied soothingly, "There is no need to worry. He is still at Hogwarts, safely guarded I might add." Harry rolled his eyes at the lie, which was actually true at the present moment but was still a lie nevertheless for the Headmaster.

"Where is he!? It's not safe for him to be outside! The freezing curse is lethal if mistreated! Please..."

The voice was heartbreaking, and so Harry slowly walked in front of the radio, and turned it off. Silence descended once more in the room, and as the boy's eyes travelled around, he quickly scampered towards a mahogany desk in a corner, where papers appeared to be staying atop of it as if someone had been working on them only just

the day before. There wasn't a single trace of humidity or water, and once his eyes left that area, they settled on the biggest bed Harry had ever seen.

"He treated himself well." Harry muttered eying the bed.

"Old master hatched me there." The Basilisk said with a light purring tone of satisfaction, "I was fed milk from a Unicorn's breasts and then brought up with the meat of phoenix." That would kind of explain the age reached actually, but Harry would have lived far better without knowing any of it. Still the bed was positively comfortable looking, and he was kind of tired.

He just hoped someone could wake him up before the lessons began the next morning.

As he sat on the edge of the bed, taking in the smell of lavender and cleanly washed sheets, he heard the light snoring of...Mrs Norris?

He had completely forgotten about the cat!

The cat had apparently been dropped and had ended up with him in the room, and it was now sleeping on a corner of the bed of Salazar happily making purring noises and light meows of pleasure...the mattress was comfortable indeed...maybe he'd just close an eye.

"Master! When do we start killing the bad blood?"

"Eh? Uhm...later on, alright?" Harry hazarded, as he looked around. If he went by logic, a man like Salazar should have had at the very least some sort of time device to calculate how much he would sleep...there were strange tacks on the side of the bed's corner post actually.

"Are you sure master? Bad blood should be purged and eaten by me!" The fact that the voice was positively filled with mirth reminded Harry of Bellatrix. A giant snake-like Bellatrix that was apparently nesting right near him, hissing and quietly watching him with its own yellow eyes of doom and death.

"Yes, I'm sure...Uhm..." A small metallic ring stood down at the bottom of it, and with a moment of intuition, Harry slowly brought it upwards of four tacks.

He'd take a light nap, wake up later on and go to dinner. That was a perfect plan: nobody would worry about him and everything would be fine. If at the very least he'd hear whatever type of 'clock' Salazar had placed.

It turned out he did, indeed, hear the clock. Much as he'd have preferred to hear it, it turned out the Slytherin founder was more of a 'physical' person to be awoken.

He was suddenly lurched out of the bed by the very own sheets, flung through the air and then levitated outright in front Salazar's mouth.

Mrs. Norris was standing on his shoulder, hissing and meowing in fright from the abrupt flight and landing, but that wasn't the end of it.

He had watched the Casper's film once. The one of the friendly ghost that had a certain scene that depicted a mechanized entrance to a secret area filled with all that was needed to shave, clean and have a nice jolly morning.

Well, Salazar had the same thing. Only it was magical, it was rusty and it was no longer working quite well. It did however turn his hair a shiny black color from the dye and make his face lightly colored by some sort of make-up. He...He kept his mouth shut through all of it, because frankly it was creepier to feel and see nothing than to actually just keep your eyes closed and see black.

Apparently it ended in front of a golden door that required a key to be inserted. A small key that...that the Bloody Baron had gifted him the year before! So that explained why he had named the basilisk 'Watson' and why he had vague memories of the year before...

The Baron had to have walked down here beforehand, with his body, and he had apparently 'befriended' or 'familiarized' with the animal in question. Then...there had been a brief moment in the forest, right?

And finally...something else still, regarding the lake...there was something within the lake. He shook his head to clear it of his thoughts, as his hands looked through the pockets of his invisible cloak, before grabbing the key and pushing it within the keyhole. The door moved to the side, opening up quietly as the key remained

into his hand. Emerging from the door that was, on the other side, nothing more than the most common wall of a most common empty...classroom.

The empty classroom?

The empty classroom where Peeves sat still, immobile and yet not moving.

It was enough.

Now he understood.

Now he had a clear focus on what had happened and on what had frozen Peeves to nothing. He smiled. He smiled slowly and happily as he began to hum a happy tune and walk out of the room, heading towards the dining hall. Mrs. Norris departed with a meow, probably to look for Argus and get her own dinner.

Harry was instead still smiling like the cat from Alice in Wonderland, if only a bit more viciously as he cheerfully waved at the portraits. He felt really fine and good. He felt as if he could take on the world with the tip of his fingers, he felt...he felt the cheering charm finish and he was back to thinking straight.

Probably Salazar was a sulky morning person, so in order not to kill someone he launched on himself a cheering charm every morning. Probably.

The dining room was packed when he managed to slip in quietly and sit down in the last remaining free seat at the corner.

"Once more the Notice-me-Not, huh Harry? Got yourself pimped up?" Basileus remarked drily from his spot with a light smile on his face, "Someone missed you." He added mysteriously, his eyes travelling to the other side of the hall, where a fidgety looking Draco was apparently not eating.

"I doubt he'll see me." Harry remarked, as he realized that lacking a lunch in his stomach he was positively famished. He didn't need to make himself known at the other table, because as he began to eat he was soon enough accosted by the nurse, Madam Potter.

"Young man!" She exclaimed hotly, stopping the entire assembly without even flinching from the combined gazes of the other houses, "You should be in the infirmary."

"With someone who wants me dead on the loose?" Harry replied, wiping his mouth, "Thanks but no thanks."

"Where have you been, then? You should know better than go against the orders of a nurse, you know!"

Harry took a deep breath, before replying slowly.

"If you cannot find me, then neither the assassin will be able to, whoever he or she is. I'm not going to tell you in front of the rest of the school, among which certainly hides the person responsible for my first visit of the school year to the infirmary!"

"Hogwarts is the safest school in all of Great Britain!" Lily replied.

"Then I sincerely hope they give out free coffins to the second best!" Harry remarked, "Because they have to see their students die one per day I suppose!"

"Ten points from Ravenclaw for attitude." Basileus snapped quickly, eying him murderously. "Be quiet, Harry." He added slowly, "Madam Potter, there is no need to make a fuss during the dinner hours." The prefect added, "I will personally speak with him on concerning acceptable behaviors and words. You will receive a written apology soon enough..." The red haired teen then stood up, gesturing for Harry to do the same. "I'll get right to it."

And then Harry was forcefully grabbed and brought out of the hall.

"It wasn't my fault!" Harry yelled at the boy as soon as the two entered the common room.

"Yes, I know." Basileus remarked, before coughing.

"Ten points to Ravenclaw."

A few seconds later, the red haired teen then chuckled.

"You, my dear boy, have the subtlety of an elephant and the calm of a war scorpion." The teen shook his head slowly, before grabbing a white piece of paper and gesturing for Harry to sit down in front of it.

"But...But she started it!" Harry exclaimed hotly, it just wasn't fair. She had been the one to yell at him! Not him, he had just...he was just going to eat and be done with it!

"And you know what you did wrong? You descended to her level." Basileus remarked calmly. "You should know that nothing irritates an opponent as much as keeping one's own cool during events like these. Instead you yelled at her. Now let me tell you a little secret," the teen began with a low murmur, after looking around to make sure there wasn't someone following them, "Adults are, by themselves, prideful."

"What does that have to do with what happened earlier?"

"You see, many adults have the arrogance to believe that age, experience and power makes one right over another. Thus adults who yell are entitled to do so while children who yell are throwing tantrums. Adults who say something wrongly are usually corrected gently while kids are scolded and called 'silly'. A child doesn't enter a conversation among adults easily, because they think he is only wasting their time and so on...adults are prideful creatures, Harry. It is their pride that is their downfall: remember it well." The teen then carefully tipped with his wand on the paper, realizing a wonderfully written apology.

"The spell's name is 'Apologia' and...let's say it's one of my favorites?" With a wink, Basileus excused himself to reach for his usual study spot, leaving behind a mouth opened Harry who was still in the process of coming to terms with the prefect's actions. It was as if he had just...well, helped him.

Maybe he could try and become a prefect too...the starry eyes of the first years were wonderful to watch, and he'd get the respect of others. That however...wouldn't mean just surviving, right? He had already told Neville that all that he wanted was to survive. Saying something else would be no different than getting...getting on his bad side.

So, for the moment, he decided he'd just call forth Machiavelli and have him deliver the 'apology' letter, which was then signed by him as Harry Scamander.

To his surprise, as soon as he signed the document the letters morphed to become written as if he had penned them, following the same style of his signature.

He shook his head slowly, muttering 'magic' as he sent his trusty hybridized mutant chicken to deliver it, and somehow he had the sort of subtle thought that the bird had been able to read his thoughts, because it pecked him once on the hand before heading out.

Apparently the bird could hold grudges...even imaginary ones.

The next day would be a Thursday...he just hoped nothing bad would happen this time around.

"Master...when...do we...kill?"

The soft hissing noise came around him, as he walked alongside the hallways. Apparently the Basilisk's voice could be carried around, or there was some sort of way for him to deliver his messages...was this what it meant to have a familiar? Voices in the back of the head hissing at him?

He did remember that Wizard's familiars were rats and bats and small animals...in dungeons and dragons. Here he had a basilisk...well, a Nazi Basilisk.

As he looked over during breakfast at his timetable, he groaned. He had defense against the dark arts as the first lesson of the day. Wonderful, plain wonderful.

"Verdimillious Duo." The professor began quite simply as the class filled in, "Is a useful dueling spell that sends discharges of electricity to an opponent, harming them and possibly knocking them over. It can also be used in a longer version incantation to make light, just like the lumos, only that it may hover over the head of the caster and be then discharged upon an enemy." James Potter was smoothly gliding through the lesson without giving much of a thought to him, and with a sigh of relief, Harry began to take notes.

His 'father' was probably the meek or calm type. Maybe he'd give him some space and not start harassing him or asking him questions of the sort.

He could live with that.

He couldn't live with the fact that this 'Verdimillious Duo' seemed a joke spell more than an actual one. It seemed a toy spell, something that apparently had little to no use in a duel. It was...stupid. It was green and it flickered around with little sparks before hitting the target; if it hit it, of course.

'Ico' was a far shorter incantation and far more likely to disable the target than 'Verdimillious Duo'. Harry was mentally calculating how many 'Ico' he could fling before one finished mouthing the normal spell, when he realized his 'target' was being punctured.

He stilled for a second, looking carefully at his small ball that should have given out a 'ping' once electricity ran through it. Instead of pinging, it was being torn apart by small holes. Just as if he had used...

"Excuse me professor," Harry asked, earning himself the look of everyone else in the classroom.

"Yes, Mr. Scamander?" James queried slowly, raising an eyebrow and seemingly having decided to take the 'be calm and let things flow' way of life.

"Can spells be used without pronouncing the incantation?"

James blinked once, before slowly nodding.

"Indeed they may, but it is advanced course material, and usually isn't taught until the sixth year...why the question?" Harry took a deep breath, before blurting out.

"It's embarrassing sir."

"What is?"

"The incantation. I mean: Verdimillious Duo? I believe 'Crucio' is far lower in number of vocals and consonants and has far fewer wand motions...how can we actually use this spell if all the enemy needs to do is say 'Crucio'? And let's not talk about other spells with even less letters, I mean, by the time we would be done saying 'Verdimillious Duo' we'd be dead at least seven to nine times over."

"Are you expecting a war anytime soon, Mr. Scamander?" James queried perplexed, "Because I can't fathom another reason you'd compare an unforgivable to a second year spell."

"No sir." Harry whispered back, "It's just...embarrassing I suppose? I mean..."

"Mr. Scamander, you will serve detention with me tonight for having disrupted the class enough." James remarked, before turning back to explain how to pronounce the spell once more to a couple of Hufflepuffs.

Harry did not speak anymore during the remaining hour, and by the end of it he had not learned at all the spell 'Verdimillious Duo'. More like he hadn't even tried to cast it.

Neville was walking alongside him to charms, and apparently he was on the verge of breaking down, since he seemed to be trying to start a conversation.

"Neville? You know you can tell me what you're thinking."

"Is she using the Crucio on you?" The boy's question hung in the air for a moment, forcing Harry to stop and look at him with pure shock visible on his face.

"Neville?"

"I know that spell is an unforgivable because hell, I saw it, I heard it, I wanted to know what could be done to fight it." The boy began to blurt out, "I once had the dream to find a counter-spell to it, to bring back my parents' sanity." He added slowly, "And then you went and spoke of it as if you had knowledge of the unforgivable. Many don't know the wand motions of the spell, many don't even know it exists due to the Ministry's censorship...did she use it on you, Harry?"

"Neville, I..." Harry was at a loss of words, the Hufflepuff should have been in Ravenclaw, how could he discern something like that? Crucio left no visible signs, did it? And just why had Neville been so keen on analyzing every word he had been saying?

"You know there are rumors that You-Know-Who didn't die." Neville commented offhandedly, "And when you spoke of war, and of Crucio...and considering who your sister is...the woman's mad and she's abusing you, isn't she?"

"Neville please stop." Harry whimpered, "Please say no more."

"Harry! You can't let her..."

"Don't." The boy pleaded, "Please...not even your head is safe. I can't tell you and you can't know."

"You aren't refuting my theory Harry..." And here the boy truly paled, "She really did it, didn't she?" The Hufflepuff was staring at him with a saddened glint in his eyes, "How...much?"

"No." Harry stated, shaking his head firmly, "You already know too much. You're at risk if you keep asking questions like those Neville. Please, don't speak to Dumbledore about it and stop."

Neville said nothing in reply, simply walking in silence for a while, before finally shuddering.

"He's back, isn't he?" He slowly whispered. "That's why you spoke of war."

"Damn it Neville!" Harry yelled, "Stop it! Just why the hell did you end up in Hufflepuff to begin with!? You're too smart for your own good..." The Ravenclaw mumbled the last line.

"We must tell someone, Harry!" Neville hissed, grabbing him by the arm. "Look, Dumbledore might be evil, but the Dark Lord? He's even worst."

"Really?" Harry deadpanned. "Fine. You want to know the truth?" He commented, "Then we'll speak, but not here and certainly not now. Tomorrow afternoon I'll tell you everything; meet me on the seventh floor in front of the dancing trolls' tapestry...till then, keep your

mouth shut and your eyes down! People can read your thoughts you know?" And then Harry hurried off.

Charms' lesson was a revision of the Wingardium Leviosa. This time around Harry's feather levitated, flew in the air, did a double spin and then landed firmly on the desk...all on the first try.

"Marvelous charm work, Mr. Scamander!" Filius exclaimed happily, "Five points to Ravenclaw!" And then the feather suddenly detonated. The white bits and pieces of it flew around strangely, as Harry covered his face by instinct with his wand that still held the spell...when he opened his eyes again, Filius was completely covered in plumage...as if his feather had multiplied into a lot of smaller ones that had then grew.

"Mr. Scamander..." Filius began dangerously, "Excellent variation of the charm! Ten more points to Ravenclaw!" He finished with a cheerful expression, before heading back to the chalkboard to explain the theory behind the spell. Harry, instead, narrowed his eyes. Someone had made his feather blow up.

Whoever it was, whatever it wanted, it clearly had tried to curse him once more but had missed, hitting the feather that had been right in front of him.

And that meant that the curse had to have been coming from the other side of the classroom...but the professor had been in front of him. So...the sides.

He scanned through his row of people. In the far corner, possibly too far to even do anything was Hermione with Lillian and Ron. Neville wasn't right next to him, and neither was Draco, but they were on his same row as well as a couple of other Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws. The rest of the people he knew were either behind or on the other side of him.

What if the curse had been time delayed? He had made the feather fly up, hadn't he? It could have been just an instant and then boom.

The fact made him shiver. Someone was really out for his blood at school.

Charms left the place to Herbology after an uneventful lunchtime, but this time around Harry outright merged with the group of Slytherins, something that was apparently expected because Draco gestured to both Gregory and Vincent to cover his flanks.

"You know, is it too much to ask for a normal year of schooling at Hogwarts?" Harry mused over, as he trudged the grounds. "I mean, last year I was in the infirmary far more times than I liked, this year? This year we've got a madman who apparently wants me dead."

"Somebody must have told the Gryffindors you were the King," Vincent commented, "And now they're out for your blood."

"I didn't think about that," Harry replied with a raised eyebrow. "But I doubt it's them. The culprit is always the last person you expect." The boy added carefully.

"If you think so." Draco mumbled, "Harry, are you sure there's nothing you'd like to tell me?" The boy added, "Concerning aunt Bella?"

"Aunt?" Harry's eyes bulged in surprise, "She's your aunt?"

"Yes. We are actually cousins now: my mother's her younger sister. Narcissa Malfoy né Black."

"Wasn't Bellatrix disowned though?" The Ravenclaw queried perplexed, as the group entered the glasshouse.

"She wasn't quite actually 'disowned' legally. She was just...told not to come around for Christmas and the likes? I think I should write to mother and ask her...when she comes around." Draco's voice was lower and his eyes downcast, as he spoke the last part.

"Don't worry: she'll be fine by Christmas," Harry replied carefully, "Nerves damage don't last much. She'll probably already be at home by half the first trimester. Peace and quiet required and all."

"Yeah, I'd like that to be true." The blond boy said wistfully, before moving to grab his pair of gloves and putting them on. "By the way: we're doing Mandrakes. They scream like hell when unplugged from the ground, so put on your ear mittens."

"Alright!"

And Herbology was spent that way, surrounded by Slytherin.

Harry entered Transfiguration with his wand ready in hand, and as he sat down on the last row in the corner, he kept his eyes open wide and a spell on the tip of his tongue. He'd show whoever had thought it funny to curse him just how well he'd answer to him. If someone could try and kill him, then he could just as well try and do the same now, could he?

Maybe it was because he had already been attacked for the day, or maybe it was because he had kept himself alert to any danger or movement, but no spells were flung his way. No curses hit him and, once transfiguration was over, his feet took him to the Defense against the Dark Arts classroom...where he'd probably serve his detention with Professor Potter.

Severus

"Someone's trying to kill Harry."

"What's different from last year?" The voice remarked.

"I don't know who it is."

"Because last year..."

"Last year it was Dumbledore meddling and various unfortunate events." Severus commented drily.

"This year it's the same as last year, plus a mysterious assailant." The voice remarked, "How quaint!"

"My...circle friends were happily claiming how 'turned' he was. His mind was quite frankly easy to see inside: he's just waiting for a chance to break away. He'd probably follow if he had a chance at a normal life." The potion's master words were laced with a small bit of sadness, as it began to stew the potion that would take quite a bit to be completed.

"Brewing that potion?"

"Nothing can go wrong...Felix Felicis will ensure that."

"Meddling with fate, luck and chance...and I'm not sure of the last one." The voice remarked, "He's surprisingly slippery for a sixth year student."

"What is it of you and calling Basileus a 'chance'?"

"Well, you see...Basileus' name is 'Artos' while his surname is 'Sfor'. Anagram it and you will get Resisto Fors A Albus that translates literally from Latin with 'I resist/object/halt/deter/stop the chance/luck from Albus' or, if you wish to be more 'fluid', it can be roughly intended as 'I stop the fortune of Albus'..."

"That's grasping straws." Severus idly remarked, "He is just a Ravenclaw like any other before him."

"Maybe...but maybe not." The voice offhandedly acknowledged. "I wish to be covered on all sides, it is after all imperative for everything to flow smoothly."

"Anything else?"

"Nope."

"Good night then."

"Good night."

Harry

His eyes, green and clear, looked straight ahead at the brown ones of James Potter. Then they flickered with annoyance to the side, where Lillian Potter's own hazel ones were looking at him, and then to the other side, where the green ones of Lily Potter were worriedly facing him.

The three were just randomly 'talking' there, apparently.

As Harry narrowed his eyes towards his 'father', he realized he'd been had.

James Potter was indeed a calm and collected person: but he was after all a smart one too.

He mentally jolted down never to get another detention...

And he hoped this interrogation wouldn't end like those of the KGB.

Author's notes

I just realized every new chapter gives me six-thousand hits now.

Well, that said!

Is anyone knowledgeable with covers? I was kind-of thinking about a pencil cover for the fanfiction in question, but I had no luck finding something 'right' on Deviantart or similar, (I'd have of course given credit to the author)

That said, I'm of course not going to answer 'who' people like the Voice are before their time.

I didn't know about the lunar phase, although I kind of assumed one can harvest a bat spleen no matter what time of the month it is...but I'm not a wizard, so I don't think it would make any difference. (I should have specified that sentence a bit more though, on that accord you are right.)

To risi: He'll do what every person who meets a Nazi basilisk does: he'll change arguments and hope he can stall it until he finds a good enough solution. Or get eaten...but that would kind of suck, wouldn't it?

To prakash...: indeed it's in the harry potter WIKI! I'm not inventing anything on that side. Salazar was older than Merlin, and Merlin was in Slytherin.

Dragonskyt: I know, but since Harry isn't going to go around asking that question, I'll use the male/animal article He/It, until a certain point where Harry can genuinely scream himself to shock at the realization that it is, indeed, a female.

Junky: Glad you liked chibi-luna. In truth I'd be delighted to see a 'aww' pic like that. Just to compare with how she's going to turn out in the future, of course.

That said, hope you enjoy and look forward to the next chapter!

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals 7

There was no clock ticking in the classroom. The light came from a few lamps nestled in the walls and from some floating candles, as Harry was slowly scribbling down his Defense Against the Dark Arts punishment: writing lines upon lines of 'I will not consider Verdimillious Duo a worst alternative than an unforgivable spell'.

That wasn't however the height of his punishment. The true height was him hearing the small talk that his 'family' was doing. Not only because it jabbed at his nerves, but also because they always tried to get him into the conversation.

"And out of all the Quidditch teams, I think the Chudley Cannons won't ever manage to get a win...ever." James Potter remarked, as Lillian merely pouted.

"Ron thinks they're going to make a comeback."

"Against the Manchester United?" Lily rhetorically asked, "Tell Ron he should stop daydreaming and study more."

"Like he'd listen to me," Lillian muttered.

"What about you, Harry? Any Quidditch team you like?" James subtly queried, as the Ravenclaw merely shook his head with a 'no' gesture and began to write on a new line.

"So you don't follow sports, do you?" The question remained unanswered as Harry merely kept on writing.

"Severus told me you have an astounding ability with potions," Lily began hesitantly, "Is it also the same with Charms?"

"Harry made his own feather fly during the revision today: Professor Flitwick gave him fifteen points by the end of the lesson!" Lillian remarked swiftly, getting a gasp of surprise from Lily.

"Oh my! He must have taken it from me then, James is more of a Transfiguration expert actually..."

Harry, meanwhile, was trying to come up with reasons to leave the room. He had to do lines at the very least for the next hour, then

from there onwards it largely depended on the time of the curfew. Unless of course the professor didn't write to him a permission to stay awake past curfew, or in order for him to go back to his room. Meaning that, depending on the circumstances...his Defense against the Dark Arts professor could keep him there for an indefinite amount of time, or until one of the two dropped.

Judging by the fact that Lillian was there too, however, it was highly possible that he'd be left to go back to his common room once curfew time was looming around.

"And that was when Lillian ended up doing accidental magic by turning her skirt yellow."

"Mom!" Lillian exclaimed, apparently flustered by something the woman had been saying. Something that he hadn't caught because he was trying to come up with reasonable escape plans. One of whom involved throwing a flash-bang and dash for nearby cover. He'd need a flash-bang though. A flash-bang and a team of spec ops ready to deploy from the door.

He doubted he could get the Americans to enter through the door though.

He even doubted he could get an army on the school's grounds.

"Did you have any case of accidental magic too?" Lily asked carefully, looking at him with a mixture of sadness, as if she was expecting the thing to be an...extremely emotional moment.

Why would it be? He had never done anything like that.

Harry shook his head slowly, while keeping on his written lines and turning the parchment to write on the other surface. He scribbled in silence, but he still couldn't help but feel eyes fixed on him. This was probably the Professor's idea of getting to know him, and because he could not escape or avoid it, it was pretty darn perfect.

"How was your summer?" Lily queried, carefully nudging forward the question as if she was carrying something made of glass. It wasn't an olive branch: it was a tentative try at communication that Harry could either take or refuse. He could avoid answering of course. He could keep himself quiet and stay there put doing nothing more than

lines until they finally understood he didn't want to talk to them...or he could talk to them.

"Fine." He muttered, feeling slightly sick at the outright breath of relief that came from the woman. Apparently she had been holding her breath for as long as it had taken him to answer. He just hoped she'd be appeased with that and ask no more.

"Is it true that Newton Scamander has wild roaming unicorns in his yard?" Lillian suddenly asked, forcing Harry to flinch. What could he say? He hadn't seen any of course, but the backyard was big enough to probably contain even a dragon.

"Probably. I didn't look." He replied. He knew that the more he spilled the more the hole against the dam known as 'silence' would be broken. He knew it, and yet he replied.

The first match had been his won by running. The second had been a draw with Lily. The third...the third was his father's win.

"What animals did you see?" Lillian queried, as Harry merely rolled his eyes at the question.

"A Cerberus." He commented offhandedly, "Growling mutt." He added slowly.

"How big was it?" Lillian asked then, strangely excited, "Last year I saw one too, you know? It was guarding the Philosopher's stone and we had to sing to him to keep him asleep."

"Which was a completely foolish thing to do, young lady," James remarked caustically, "And is the reason you spent your summer holed up in your room."

"We had to protect the stone from Voldemort!" Lillian exclaimed hotly, "He's coming back and you know it!"

"Now, now." Lily said, with an admonishing tone, "Nobody came by and stole the stone Lillian...There's no Voldemort around."

Right, the one at Harry's bedside by the Scamander's cottage clearly wasn't the Dark Lord. Nope, it had to be another Hitler. Well...he

hadn't actually seen the magical Hitler of course. He had kept his eyes closed during the small talk.

"But...the unicorns! Hermione and I discovered that..." Lillian's trying to explain her thoughts were met with the usual denying and shaking of heads of the other two adults...and Harry understood what Basileus meant.

When adults are confronted with the thoughts of children, their first action is denial or refusal, because if they don't believe it, then a child shouldn't have realized it earlier. It was, in a word, 'adult's pride'.

It was also kind of funny, because Harry knew Voldemort hadn't actually died, and here was the rest of his family arguing that it was dead or returning. They were both wrong, for different reasons, but still wrong.

Of course, he was deluding them by saying small words and letting them fantasize by themselves how his summer had been like. Still, he began to write again his lines as the chatter intensified up to the point where the professor had to simply butt in with his position, forcing Lillian to keep quiet.

"Not another word Lillian!" James hissed dangerously, "Voldemort is dead and gone. Now," trying to regain his bearings and enter a far easier argument to speak of, "How's your transfiguration homework going?"

"Dad! I'm working on it alright?" Lillian mumbled half-embarrassed.

"And what about you Harry? Do you need any help with homework?" Lily asked gently, "If you need a hand with potions..."

"I'm fine." He was pretty sure that in Ravenclaw, he'd just have to ask and he'd be surrounded by people willing to teach. It was kind of strangely teary to know that he could just ask and he'd get an answer. Half of the times, he had seen people starting their homework alone and finishing it with ten to twenty Ravenclaw of different years piping in with suggestions.

That was probably why Ravenclaw had the highest level of grades per single student. You just couldn't 'not' get help. Unless you were

stuck under a Fidelius of course...and now he'd probably see the results first hand, without anything to bar him from being seen or remembered.

"Oh." There was a slight sad tone in the woman's voice, which morphed in probable fake cheerfulness, "If you ever need a hand, I'd be glad to help, you know?"

Harry nodded quietly, before scribbling the last few lines of the parchment. He just so casually glanced once more to the first face of the paper, and discovered it empty and white. Perfect for writing an infinite amount of lines apparently...

He began once more dutifully writing, his hand was just slightly uncomfortable, but not that much.

"Food...master offers food..."

Harry stilled his scribbling. He knew that was the Basilisk's voice. He knew it echoed through the chambers. Then why did this voice sound a bit different?

"Master is not you!" Alright, that was the Basilisk. Apparently someone had pissed him off quite a bit. "Betrayer! Filth! Liar! Unworthy of the blood of Salazar!" Yes, the Basilisk was pretty much pissed off.

The fact he was hearing him clearly was strange, it sounded far more as if he was there listening, rather than hearing echoes coming from the pipes.

"Wait! I can offer you the exit!"

"Unworthy of the tongue of Salazar! Fake! Die!"

And suddenly Harry felt as if something had just rammed against something else, somewhere. His quill snapped under his fingers from the sudden pulling sensation, and as ink covered in blotches his hand he stared dumbly at his papers. There again, the runic-like symbols he had seen on the books within the chambers of secret shelf. Was that... His eyes focused on the sinuous lines that suddenly made so much sense to him, so much that he knew what the language was. Well, no.

"Master is writing lines?" The voice of his guard-snake echoed through the inner sleeve of his robe, probably one of the most comfortable places for the snake in question to watch and act from if the need arised.

"Harry! Careful and dose your strength with the quill!" Lily fussed, moving closer with her wand out and cleaning off the ink with it. The lines he had currently written had ended up being erased as well, but the snake in his robes was apparently fussing and hissing, making the sides of his right arm fling around as it tried to leave and probably bite the Potter.

"Stupid woman! You do not erase the lines of the master!" The snake exclaimed, its head emerging from his robe's wrist as it bared its fangs at the red haired woman. James was already on his feet, his wand in his hand and ready to strike, while Lillian looked quite scared at the sight of the snake.

"Calm down." Harry muttered, before suddenly flinching at the immediate silence that surrounded him, "And come here." The snake stilled, before slowly slithering its way back onto his arms, and subsequently disappearing within his robe once more. Apparently if the clothes within the Invisible Cloak moved, then they were seen from the outside too.

"Harry," James asked slowly, "Did you just speak to the snake?"

"Well..." Harry mumbled, "He's sort of protecting me and was a bit angered when the lines I was writing were erased."

"Was it Bellatrix idea to conjure a snake and use him to guard you?" James asked again, and this time Harry shook his head.

"No sir...I found him."

Which was true. He could have added how the extremely poisonous snake was an 'honor guard' selected by the Basilisk...and which belonged to the magical Nazi party.

"How long have you...talked to snakes?" James was looking positively sickened by then, and he was still holding his wand.

"Since...this summer?" Harry replied, "Never saw a snake before, professor."

"James." Lily hotly stated, "We need to tell the Headmaster: our son is a parseltongue!"

And that, Harry quickly thought, was the reason he would never, ever, tell them anything about himself ever again.

"Could be my line of the family...maybe an old great-great grandfather of sorts..." James mused it over, "But I never managed to speak with snakes, it's dark arts at its finest: Voldemort was one to begin with."

Lillian had apparently wanted to blurt out something, but she suddenly reeled in, now afraid of Harry probably. Of course she would now consider him no better than Voldemort, and so too would his 'family' and if not soon, then after Dumbledore would have his 'chat' with them.

"The detention is finished." James quickly spoke, "Get back to your dormitories, both of you."

Harry was fast in standing up and leaving, but the way he tightened his grip around his wand was no mistake. He could trust no-one of his family apparently, if their accusing gazes over him were anything to be spoken of. So he knew how to talk to snakes, how wonderful...not. Instead of being amazed or at least slightly concerned, they were probably already thinking of how much he and Voldemort were similar.

Never mind him in Ravenclaw and the Dark Lord in Slytherin.

Harry stood up quickly, before moving out of the room and into the hallway. His first thoughts went to go and check on the basilisk, but with having to do at the very least three fourth of the road to Ravenclaw tower with Lillian next to him, he wouldn't have made it in time.

"You speak to snakes." Lillian commented.

"I also know French." Harry remarked quietly, "But nobody asks me if I'm similar to the French king now, right?"

"But...speaking with snakes is evil." The girl mumbled.

"Why? Because many can't and are jealous because of it? Just like many first years can't play Quidditch because of rules, and yet you could?" Harry replied, "Morality decides what is right or wrong: not laws."

Lillian said nothing for a while, simply walking alongside him quietly.

"You ever think...if you had ended up in Gryffindor like me, and if you'd always been known as my brother...things would have been different?"

"No." Harry's harsh reply made the girl look at him with a slightly sad expression, and so the boy elaborated. "Uchronia is bad for the nerves."

"U...Uchronia?"

"It's the definition of an alternate history. Think about what would be the world now if Hitler had won, or if Voldemort had...That's Uchronia. It isn't real and it won't be. You can't change the past."

"So you never thought about mom or dad?" She asked slowly, why was the girl sad of all things? She should be happy: she wouldn't have to get her parents attention split between the two of them, and she'd keep being the Girl who lived with no problems. He was the one who had been apparently 'chosen' by the Dark Lord for some sort of strange reason.

"I learned they were dead. I thought them dead for years...sure, at first I might have imagined something, but now? Now there's no longer anything for me to think about." He shrugged, "I don't simply care."

"Liar." She muttered, "If you didn't care you wouldn't have been jealous of me in first year." She accused, holding a frown now on her face.

"No." Harry chuckled nervously, "I did not do it because of jealousy," he defended, "I did it because it was the right thing to do."

"You're the King of Slytherin aren't you?" She mumbled, "I didn't want to believe the rumors, but...you really made Gryffindor stand out as the bad guys!"

"Did I now?" Harry remarked scathingly, "Careful what you accuse me of, Potter."

Lillian narrowed her eyes at him, before huffing and crossing her arms over her chest, her gaze away from his.

"I'm Lillian. Potter's my dad or my mother...your dad or mom too." She stubbornly replied.

"You aren't going to let this drop, are you?" Harry deflated.

"You're my brother." She muttered, "We're in the same year, twins even. Yet...yet you didn't know dad or mom, and stayed with those horrible muggles...you're angry. Mom told me it's normal, that you're just scared and because of that you try and get me angry so I can't reason with you and expose your...your real self. But I'm not stupid! I survived Voldemort, I can survive talking with you without being angry." She insisted.

"And what if you don't like my real self?" Harry mused out loud, "What if I'm an absolutely evil and wicked person who thrives on the death and blood and pain of others?"

"You aren't." She muttered back. "You saved me. Even if you're jealous of me or if you hate me...you saved me from the troll. You went to help Hermione in the bathroom. You're not evil, Harry. I know it."

Harry groaned. He just was a pretty selfish individual who had no intentions of doing anything for either side except survive. Even then, he was being practically coerced into choosing...and his sister was apparently one of those stupid idealistic kids who believed in the happy endings.

That did make it all the more difficult to ignore. He could be an utter bastard to the Weasley, and to the Granger in part, but this? He was kind of unprepared to facing an emotively charged girl who was apparently a goody two shoes.

He didn't reply to her, and as he separated from her, to reach for the stairs and climb upwards, he knew, he just knew, that she was staring at his retreating back. He couldn't stay and talk with her as normal...he had to kill his heart and go forward.

He wasn't Harry Potter. He was Harry Dursley.

Even though his name might have been Harry Scamander...

He still was Harry, wasn't he?

It was with these thoughts that he slumbered into his bed, forgetting all about the day and wishing nothing more than a full night of rest. Had he been even a bit curious, he might have queried why there was a blond first year reading on the sofa of the common room near the fire. He was, however, too tired to even think straight.

The following day, as he slowly descended the stairs, he realized that the first year had slept on the sofa for the entire night. Someone had placed a wool cloth over her as a bed cover though, it was thick and warm-looking, but...

It was none of Harry's business.

He had to convince Neville not to speak about his condition to anyone else. Maybe he could try an obliviate spell.

Maybe he could knock him unconscious and feed him to the Basilisk.

Maybe he could...

No.

It was wrong.

He wouldn't do something like that. He wouldn't resort to Obliviating his enemies or his friends ever. It was sick, twisted and wrong. It was like rape, only it was done against memories and thoughts and...

And it was evil.

Breakfast was uneventful, albeit Neville kept stealing glances nervously towards him, something that Draco, half of the Slytherins, his 'parents' and half the Gryffindors were doing too. Just what the hell was it all about?

Was his being 'King' already renown school-wide?

Taking a deep breath, he gave a quiet munch to his treacle tart.

The next second he heard the crunch.

He looked at the content of his treacle tart.

He whitened.

He dropped the tart.

Then he proceeded to puke his guts out near the table, as he felt hands clapping on his back. He didn't hear much of what the other students were saying, but he just...he just couldn't stop the retching. By the time a professor got around him, muttering a Finite Incantatem and then bringing him to the infirmary to get checked and cleaned up, the news had already circulated throughout the remaining tables.

There was the corpse of a dead snake within his tart. A small, charred thing...

But Harry knew all too well what it meant...because his 'Honor Guard' hadn't been there that morning.

Draco

It was Saturday of the first weekend of the first week of school. Harry had outright disappeared from the school since Friday afternoon, and he wasn't anywhere normally frequented by the students. Draco had looked for him in the kitchens, outside the Ravenclaw common room, in the dungeons and he had even gone as far as looking for him with the Potters, of all people.

He had been tempted to write a letter to his father and ask if he had heard anything from his aunt. The only reason he hadn't had been, strangely enough, the Hufflepuff Neville.

Who was downright scary when he was angry...quite a bit more than Gregory himself.

After the disappearance of the King from the infirmary, the rumors had it that some vengeful Gryffindor had packed his tart with an animal's dead body to scare him stiffly. Considering it was a snake, it was pretty clear what the message would have been for. The problem was on how the snake had gotten in the tart.

A 'swapping' spell would have worked from a distance, but while some claimed it had been cooked in the kitchen Draco knew better: the house elves wouldn't dare to 'correct' a treat with corpses of animals. Those of the school were all bound to help the students, not to try and poison them.

And the snake was a clear message: someone hated him for having helped Slytherin.

Now, standing in the common room of Slytherin, chewing on his fingernails, Draco was debating actually writing or not to his father.

He knew that something was going on. The week hadn't even finished and yet...it had to have been the Weasley twins probably. The retching that could only be stopped with a spell? Had to be some sort of junk prank toy from Zonko or whatever the name of that shop was.

It was utterly disgusting how the house of the brave had become the house of the bullies and the bratty.

"This has to stop." Flint remarked rudely, "The Weasley twins have gone on long enough with it."

"They said they didn't do it." Ginny remarked quietly. The youngest of the Weasley family was uncomfortable since her arrival, but that much Draco knew was partially due to her family's reputation. Even with Harry's order of acting nicely and making sure the first year knew nothing of the 'plan' and letting them on the general good willingness, she was still treated with a bit of contempt.

"Of course you've got to defend your family, Weasley, but..." Flint's comment was cut off by the girl's sharp reply.

"I am not!" She exclaimed hotly, "I...I just know them, alright? They wouldn't do something that crass during lunch hour. I'm not defending them!"

"Still it reeks of them." Flint commented, only for Draco to start pondering for a moment.

"We need to find out the culprit." The blond haired boy decided, "And to do that we need to know what was used as a retching spell and how. Then if we can find out what snake it was and how it got there, we'd have a possible line of culprits."

The Slytherin's dungeon door opened slowly, and a downcast Vincent entered soon followed by Daphne and Tracey.

"We looked everywhere! He wasn't even in the restricted section of the library and it's just as if...as if he disappeared!" Tracey exclaimed, just as Daphne marched straight ahead to where Draco was.

"You should warn your aunt."

Draco sighed.

It appeared he had no choice in the matter.

Then the door slammed open fast, and a flustered Gregory yelled out at the top of his lungs.

"Someone wrote on the ceiling of the great hall! Come quick!"

The next moment, the Slytherin common room was emptied.

Harry

"Custodio." He whispered softly. The green light of the torches of the chamber of secret eerily illuminated his reflection, as he stared at the mirror the chamber had conjured for him. The radio was magical, clearly, and apparently each of its 'frequencies' was in truth a room in the Hogwart's castle. One of the two spinning dials meant the floor level, and the other numbered the room.

He hadn't confronted the basilisk about who he had been angry with, considering whoever it was it hadn't returned. He should have asked who the other parseltongue in the school was, but at present all that he wanted was a safe place to sleep in and let his worries leave.

If the curser had managed to 'kill' his bodyguard without him even realizing...then not even his room was safe. He could find safety only in the chamber, being safeguarded by a giant magical Nazi snake.

It was safe. It was good, and it was his.

He was probably being paranoid, but with the Bloody Baron hovering over him, and carefully avoiding to even stay in the same line of sight as the Basilisk, he felt pretty much ready.

"I ditched Neville on Friday afternoon." He muttered, feeling the magic of the spell rush through his veins, "You think he already called someone?"

"I suppose he didn't: we Hufflepuff are loyal...he'd probably wait to hear from you, especially if he believes there is a valid reason for your actions," Newton Scamander commented, floating in from the hole the Basilisk had nested in. The man was a perfectly integer ghost, with no wounds whatsoever to recognize the cause of death. He was wearing a normal looking, if a bit old style, cardigan and a pair of large comfortable trousers. Being a ghost kind of made him spooky, more than scary...no. Even as a ghost the man was anything but 'scary'.

To think that up above in the Ravenclaw common room there were people screaming his name in fear for the 'Newt' exam that had taken his name for. Yet the man was anything but that.

He was kind of surprised what his determination could do, when really pushed on a life or death situation. He hadn't thought about it, but his wand was indeed powerful as long as his mind was behind his intentions. He wanted to live and to survive, and if someone was out for his blood, then he'd do everything and anything in order to get through...and get his revenge.

It had been nothing more than a snake, a snake he hadn't even named or talked to much, but it had been someone who had valued

his own life at the very least as a person. The snake had guarded him, badly but still tried to, and he had died in his line of duty.

Yet nobody would think of him as anything more than a friendly ghost by just looking at him.

"Now, what Custodio does is seemingly stupid, but highly effective when being targeted." The Bloody Baron remarked. "It will make you hear a barking noise when someone is pointing a wand at you."

"I know." Harry muttered, "You explained it was the easiest thing barring going around fully decked for warfare."

"I remain of the opinion that a suit of armor would do you good." Newton remarked, "If not at the very least put to good use the bezoar and make a fake teeth with it."

"And become James Bond the second?" The boy snapped back. "No thank you. I like my teeth just the way they are: normal and without gimmicks inside."

"Control yourself." Henry stated, "To keep calm is the first way to battle. To assess the strength of the enemy the second, and to deliver a crippling blow is the third and final way." The Baron was slowly hovering towards the collection of books on the shelf, hissing ever so softly in parseltongue a couple of the titles that ranged from 'Ancient Curses' to 'Poisonous recipes' passing through the usual dark spells that would have made any historian sell their soul to just be in the same room with them...and Harry hadn't opened a single one of them.

The room was a sort of Room of Requirements, only it provided everything, even food...probably by snitching it from the kitchen.

Not that Harry had eaten much. After the last surprise in the tart...he had grown weary of food that could hide inside nasty stuff.

"Cingo." The wand circled around Harry's head, before slowly descending downwards. The second spell done, the Ravenclaw boy took deep calming breaths. "I can do this now, right?"

"Yes. You may live in fear, but if you do not fight fear, then nothing will ever change." Newton commented slowly. "I'm sure we'll have

many more months ahead of us, in which we may learn far more on the magical animals' physiology than ever...but at the present, you have done your tantrum...now it's time to face the world."

Harry nodded, and then turned towards the Basilisk, who had been napping till then.

"Watson!" Harry called, as his familiar stirred and then slowly blinked its eyes open.

"Yes, master?"

"Who was the one that called for you?"

"I do not know, master." The Basilisk admitted. "It called through my exit, but when I accused the false and moved to attack, he was gone." Frustration seeped into the beast's voice, "I will hunt the fake down, master. I swear my fangs will not rest until his body rots within my body!"

"Ehm...Alright?" Harry hazarded.

"Master? May I ask a question?"

"Of course you can."

"We...We are not going to kill those of impure blood, right?"

"Wh...What? But you..."

"Master, I am first and foremost your familiar. I sense discomfort in you at the argument. I am not...stupid. I obey the will of my master. I have feasted for centuries upon the spiders of the forest, upon the centaurs and the unicorns. I do not meddle with hate or like."

"But you were pretty vocal last time!" Harry exclaimed, not knowing where this conversation was going at all.

"Because the last master would not let me eat anything else, master...when he left, I was happy."

"The...last master?"

"Decades ago, I barely remember. A descendant like you, who wielded the tongue and knew the spells...one whose soul was evil and broken...one who was bitter with the world. When I will recall the name, I will call you, master." The Basilisk then coiled around itself, letting its tongue flash through the air gently.

"Oh...good then...Watson." Harry nodded, "If you need to eat...you can go outside in the forest, but be careful alright? Wouldn't want you to be caught."

"Thank you master." Was there joy in that snake's voice? Puzzled, Harry found himself mechanically chuckling and 'patting' a scale of the giant's snake face. The fact the tail was bobbing to the sides like that of a dog furthermore...damn. Was he actually finding snakes cute of all things?

"Oh well..." Harry mumbled, and then he turned to leave. He hadn't expected leaving the chamber of secrets through the bathroom on the second floor, the one for the girls, but apart for an extremely scary and paralyzed ghost of a certain 'Myrtle' there was nothing that warranted holding it close...which suited a secret exit for the basilisk so much better than anything else.

His steps in the corridor brought along many whispers, some actually pointing at him and moving to the side. He raised an eyebrow in surprise, what was this all about actually?

"Harry!" Neville yelled as he pushed through a group of nosy students, clamping with his hand on his arm, "Where the hell have you been!?"

The moment the boy's hand came close enough to nearly touch his arm Harry knew the spell Cingo worked.

The next instant his wand was hovering straight ahead, in his hand, pointed at the boy.

"Training." Harry muttered, flicking his wand back in his sleeve. "What's going on? What's the fuss?"

Neville bit his lips, before finally gesturing at him to move towards the dining hall, where the rest of the students were apparently watching with fascination the ceiling.

"That is what the fuss is about." Neville remarked slowly, pointing where usually the mock sky ceiling of Hogwarts castle would be, and where instead letters, giant red letters, stood eerily written.

THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS HAS BEEN OPENED! FRIENDS OF THE HEIR, BEWARE FOR YOU BELIEVE IN A FALSE KING!

Oh.

Oh.

OH.

On a side note, it wasn't even October to begin with.

On a plus note, it was probably a badly played prank.

On a minus note...he was screwed; especially when over a hundred eyes settled on him as soon as he walked in.

The Custodio spell, of course, had to begin barking in that precise moment.

Author's notes

Cliff hanger, once more!

This second year is going to be packed with surprises!

Now, the spells come both from the same meaning: 'Custodio' means to 'Guard/protect' (Like the Cerberus Custos) While 'Cingo' means Girdle/Circle and Guard as a last one.

Now, someone asked how the basilisk managed to feast on phoenixes.

I believe that said animals wouldn't be so rare if they could just be 'reborned' endlessly and thus increase their population. I supposed that Salazar would hunt for his little 'familiar' and feed him with his stuff.

As for why MRS. Norris wasn't affected: I explained it in the author notes, glad some caught on; the eyes of the basilisk go on a 'on/off' death powers thing by will.

For the Radio, it's actually easy: radios are magical things, for wizards at least, and thus they work. That said it was more of a Room of Requirement feature of Salazar: he'd spy on others by using the radio to do it, thus knowing what went on in the castle.

To Vikraal: 'Runes' are something anyone can point and say 'It's a symbol, has to be a rune'. Doesn't need a reference to Arabic, because 'runes' are merely symbols aligned together (In Harry's opinion, mind you)

Garoorar: Probably not. Considering the different approach, Tom would have just settled the snake on fighting, Harry instead just wanted a safe place to rest. In truth it's a bit strange Salazar would build a 'chamber of secrets' and then use it as a Basilisk depository filled with water...at least a bed somewhere.

Now, Harry is in Ravenclaw for a reason: he researches knowledge because he finds it interesting, not because he wants to become powerful. That's why he's with the crows and not the snakes. His ambition is survival and revenge, not 'rule the world and smash the enemies'.

Problem is someone's out for his blood in his second year...soon it will be October!

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals 8

One moment, Harry was hearing a barking sound. The next a hail of spells had suddenly lunged at him from nowhere in the dining hall. Normally, self-preservation implies getting down and ducking cowardly when jinxes and curses start flying around. Sometimes it asks the person to jump backwards, forward, roll to the side, sidestep...sometimes however self-preservation just isn't enough and the person freezes. When that happens, it doesn't matter how prepared you can be...you get hit.

That is, if you are alone. The moment the first spell had departed from a corner of the room called forth by a pretty strong but high pitched voice, it had the unwanted effect to make the rest of the students panicked, with some flinging spells at random in random directions, trying to calm down the others. Whoever launched the first spell actually delivered to the infirmary twenty-seven students...many were caught in the crossfire between other students, while some suffered mild bruising in getting out of the common hall by pushing others, and in the end, of the few that remained, Harry was untouched. A bit ruffled, maybe. A bit pissed off, probably. Still, he was completely untouched by the sheer moment of madness that had passed through him without doing much...except disheveling his appearance.

Someone had to have casted a charm on him of sorts, in order to make him slightly less noticeable. It had to be that way, because all around him people had dropped like flies.

So...he was wondering why he was the one being brought to the headmaster's office.

He also was kind of surprised there wasn't Bellatrix already hovering over him. That was a positive thing though...unless she was already in the Headmaster's office.

The Gargoyle swept aside at the order of 'Sweet Garlic', which Harry sincerely hoped wasn't a type of candy used in the wizard world. And there stood Dumbledore atop the flight of stairs, standing behind his desk. The hideous colors of the robes did nothing to lower the general effect of distaste he was feeling for the man.

It had to show, because the man's first action, even before he could take a step in the room, was to stare deeply into his own eyes.

Harry didn't know what the watch would show him. He knew that, whatever it was, it would just make it in such a way to make the man think everything was under control, but at the same time deliver nothing back. A few moments, and Albus was smiling brightly.

"Well my boy, I must admit this New School Year is being...a bit hectic, to say it in one word."

Harry's mouth was suddenly devoid of saliva, his throat felt parched and his neck itched. It took him staring at the man to finally realize something.

Someone knew the chamber had been opened.

Someone who apparently knew parseltongue and had decided to paint on the ceiling...and whoever this one was, he had a grudge with him.

He wasn't the 'Boy-Who-Lived'! He was the brother of the Girl Who Lived! These sorts of things should have happened to her, not to him!

"I see you're afraid...worry not, no harm was done." Of course he'd say that: he didn't lose a...a snake? A friend? Someone...He lost no-one in this silly attempt at getting Harry's life.

Maybe he was being a bit melodramatic though: nobody had actively tried to send him a killing curse of some sorts...but he shivered at the thought of what would happen during the last day of the year if the first week was like this.

"And certainly we know fully well you did not start any of this...senseless cursing in your way, if anything, you have aided in uniting the houses...albeit against another one." Harry's gaze lowered on the ground. He knew that the only reason he wasn't being obliviated right about then was because of who was in the room.

Lily Potter stood in a corner, together with James Potter and a stern looking Deputy Headmistress McGonagall. On the other side of the

office Filch was giving him some sort of 'cheer up' glare, while Filius was unexpectedly silent and pondering and Snape wasn't present to begin with.

"Indeed, Mr. Scamander." Minerva spoke slowly, "We are safely assuming that it is one of the Gryffindors who decided to enact against you such a bad taste prank that I can guarantee you I will personally head any investigation in uncovering who did this, and see him punished with expulsion personally."

"And I'll get Miss Clearwater to follow you as an escort," Flitwick remarked, "Or I may ask another one of the older years Ravenclaws if you prefer: these blatant attempts at injuring the life of one of my house are an insult to all of the good will the founders poured into Hogwarts!"

"I say we should build the school upon a lake of molten brimstone and with a dragon hidden beneath it."

"Yeah, because lava grows on trees in England."

"Shut it you two! I'm the one who's going to be forced into building it, I know it already."

"But Helena! You're the smart one!"

"Flattery will get you nowhere, Godric!"

Harry blinked slightly, as he felt the worried gaze of Dumbledore on him.

"Ah..." The man muttered, "It appears I miscalculated I'm afraid...young Harry here is still under shock for the attack." Uh? What was he saying now? He was pretty much fine, right?

Shock? Him? Wasn't that something they showed on television during those war documentaries? He wasn't going into shock was he? Why would he? Everything was just plain fine, right?

He wasn't a hero that had to dash through machine guns flaring and he wasn't some sort of war veteran coming back with missing limbs and traumatic nights spent in a trench. Why would he go into shock?

He was perfectly fine. Sure, maybe the atmosphere in the headmaster's office was a bit oppressive, and maybe there were far too many peoples for him to like the place, and maybe, just maybe, the flaming chicken in the corner was looking at him sadly, but truly...he wasn't going into shock.

"Mr. Scamander...it would be better if you sat down." The Headmaster kindly spoke, flicking his wand just so slightly, as a chair practically appeared beneath him, making him sit forcefully upon it.

"Oh." Harry muttered, feeling slightly numb. He hadn't realized it till then, but his hands were incredibly pale and clenched, and he apparently had goose bumps. Maybe that was why the Headmaster insisted he was under shock?

"Maybe we should let him rest in the infirmary?" Lily asked carefully.

"I fear that should we do that, we wouldn't be seeing Mr. Scamander here until the start of the lessons on Monday." Dumbledore remarked with a sort of grandfatherly tone, "It appears you have gone to quite a good length in exploring the castle's many secrets young man. Particularly some that would be best left alone." Harry froze. He couldn't know about the chamber of secrets already, could he? There was a basilisk in there for god's sakes! A giant snake poisonous and hell bent on killing whoever wasn't his master...or his master had okay-ed to kill.

"I always said that the empty classrooms should be closed and off limits, Albus." James muttered slowly, "A lot of them contain dangerous creatures and are in need of a disinfestation to boot."

The Headmaster merely nodded slowly, before turning to Argus.

"Mr. Filch, would it be possible to have the unused rooms closed?" The caretaker's reply was a curt affirmative, and so the Headmaster kept on talking, "Good...now, on to more...unpleasant business." Here Harry tensed.

This wasn't going to be good at all.

"Do you have any prime suspects for this, Harry?" The man asked.

Harry was about to blurt it out, but he held himself.

He couldn't give himself off that he knew it had to be a parseltongue now, could he?

He squirmed on his seat, before shaking his head quickly.

"The rumor has it the Weasley twins swore some sort of crusade on you because of how you treated their younger brother, Ron." Minerva pointed out, "and I must say the youngest Weasley is giving off rumors of you being a dark lord in the making to the house."

"Just like Gryffindors have been troublemakers for at least the past decades." Harry retorted, "But does history remember that? Course not. I did however scour through Argus' archives, and I must admit I was impressed with how well they were kept." Strangely, Argus was chuckling from the praise, "Turns out, some...Marauders, shall we say." Here it was James' Potter turn to flinch, "Apparently committed quite a bit of pranking, some even heavy handed...and it didn't stop there. We can go back centuries, and we'd always find those 'loveable Gryffindor prankster' all headmasters seem to so fondly ignore."

"So you are suspecting the Weasley Twins, Harry?" Albus asked curiously, but he knew better than to reply with that.

"I believe that propaganda is a powerful, wicked tool, Headmaster." I shook my head slowly, "It paints different lights and changes what is good and what is bad. I am not suspecting the twins however." He doubted they'd be parseltongues.

Last he had asked the Bloody Baron, only descendants of Slytherin boasted that possession in their family trees. The wonders of magical genetics probably or some sort of secret magical 'boosting'...or maybe the parseltongues had formed the Slytherin line to begin with.

He didn't know questions that dated far back, and Harry had never asked the ghost to delve too much deeply into that. Sometimes, speaking of the past, the ghost outright froze and then stiffly changed arguments.

"Uhm...Am I correct to assume you have been doing some...misinformation last year?" Albus queried with a strangely more sober tone.

"Nothing that hasn't already been done on the Slytherin for years Headmaster; being a neutral entity, I returned the ball to the central court. The Slytherins then acted upon themselves and brought the battle back into the Gryffindor's area. It's called Karma." Harry shrugged, before slowly realizing he was giving away more than he should. He should stick to yes and no answers from that moment onwards if he wished to see the end of his schooling career without causing more harm than benefit.

"Well Mr. Scamander, there is something else I would like to know." Albus remarked offhandedly, "You appear to have been receiving extensive tutoring during your first year. While I applaud your materialistic approach to battlefields, I must incline as to why you think it is worthy of notice for a second year such as yourself."

Harry chuckled slightly, before realizing this answer was easier to answer to than the rest.

"I'm muggle raised, Headmaster. Do you know what wizards are considered in muggle culture nowadays?" He knew that he shouldn't be answering a question with a question, but still he felt the need to ask anyway.

"Are you perhaps referring to Tolkien and his...Gandalf? Or to Saruman and his powers?"

"No sir, I'm speaking of the Neverwinter Nights multiplayer roleplaying game that came out just last year. I'm speaking of spells like 'Fireball' and 'Thunderstorm', I'm speaking of the eternal question between 'might is right' and 'power corrupts'. So, when you put a muggle raised boy and you head him off to the library, if said boy has at least played an Ultima series game or has some knowledge of that Final Fantasy game that comes from Japan, then yeah...magic equals destruction on large scale."

Half the room was lost in his words. The other half looked kind of queasy.

"Harry...Are you telling me...muggles know about magic already?" The boy was now looking at them with a shocked expression.

"You've got to be kidding me right? Come on! Go in a supermarket and look at their games section! If you can't find a fantasy game with magic in it then you're clearly doing it wrong!" Harry retorted hotly, "I mean it! Oh come on, some games are even older than..."

"Ultima series still going on strong?" Argus asked quietly.

The room turned to the Hogwarts caretaker that was apparently befuddled at such stares.

"What!? I've got nephews! I'm not completely cut off from the world, I'll let you know!"

"New trilogy coming out this year with the first installment." Harry piped in right back, "At least...that's what I heard last time. Didn't have a pc at the Scamander's cottage to check it out."

"Pc?" Minerva was flabbergasted to say the very least. She had a sickly green color too.

"Personal Computer." Harry replied, "Muggle technology objects that...ah...Now I get it." The boy nodded, before looking at the Headmaster with the most condescending gaze he could muster, as if he was stating an obvious truth to a bunch of psychotic imbeciles.

"You go near technology with wands, don't you?"

Needless to say, Harry was finding the need not to laugh to be incredibly difficult to maintain.

"Uhm...I might need to question some of the aurors working ethics then, this is a clear infringement of the statute of secrecy...how...widespread, is it?"

"You...You aren't joking right?" Harry mumbled, "Come on Headmaster. You must have heard of Dungeons and Dragons! Come on! It came out as a pen and paper roleplaying game in nineteen seventy-four! The Wizard class was in there already! You can't expect to know Tolkien and not know about Dungeons and Dragons...maybe muggles don't know about the 'abracadabra' of the real wizards...but magic isn't much unknown to them at all."

"How widespread, Mr. Scamander?"

Harry was at a loss of words. The man was old, alright, maybe not in touch...but even Argus knew about the Ultima series of games, if he had nephews, how much were the chances of him not knowing? It struck him as either impossible or bizarre.

"Worldwide." Harry shrugged, "Last year the Dungeons and Dragons basic set came out, by the way...you might want to pick it up and check it out."

"Well...it has been an enlightening afternoon I must say." Albus remarked standing up, as Harry did the same, still keeping his perplexed look. "Professor Flitwick, please escort Mr. Scamander back to the Ravenclaw common room."

It was quite embarrassing actually.

"So...sir...was he really..." Harry couldn't find the words. Certainly they would have suspected that the muggles might have just invented magic by themselves as a fantasy thing, right? Tolkien was an existing example. There were fairies in the myths and evil witches in the stories...magic had always been fantasized worldwide.

"Mr. Scamander," Flitwick commented, "Knowledge can be learned in different ways, but the way we learn is always limited to what we already know. The new generations know things the older do not know: it's the law of change. Nothing that is stagnant will survive the passing of ages. The Headmaster merely did not think muggles might have gone further away from Tolkien, and he is one who fights for muggle-born rights. Thus he was surprised by this...it is unexpected."

"But why? I mean...don't people talk about it? In the common rooms or anywhere? How can someone just not pick it up?" Harry's question was met with a slight frown from the small professor, who merely sighed.

"Maybe it was picked up by other people who dismissed it. Tell me, do you think the queen of Britain knows that in Russia a baby is dying of cold beneath the snow? No, of course not. The mother who threw the baby in the cold knows but keeps quiet. The man who saw the scene has the choice to tell the nearby men or do nothing. In the

end the queen might never know of the dying baby, and the choice remains to that single man that has seen." Filius spoke slowly, "It depends on how the man has grown and be taught, that the baby might live or die then. It depends on whether he might have been educated to do the right thing, the easy thing or the worst thing."

"Is that why you became a professor, sir?" Harry asked slowly.

"It is a reason, I admit. When I was younger I held honor high enough to become a duelist: nothing makes my blood shiver more than remembering the roars of the crowd and the tension dispersing into pure magical power once I unleashed the spell upon my enemies." The man shook his head slowly, "But that's in the past. I suppose..."

Harry knew the sentence wasn't finished.

"However, considering just how badly this unknown attacker wishes to see you injured, Mr. Scamander...I would be glad to offer you a couple of hours a day to teach you the basics of dueling."

The offer was good. He knew it. He knew Ravenclaws wouldn't dare to pass on it, he knew he should actually accept the offer and go forward. He knew it, and yet...this would mean declaring war. This would mean taking things within his hands and solve them.

Or maybe not. Maybe he was overly considering the events. Maybe this was just a prank war and...

"Is Friday afternoon possible, professor?" Harry asked.

"Indeed it is, young Raven." Professor Flitwick remarked with a light grin, "I suppose we will see each other at charms sooner than that, but I advise you take it easy at least this upcoming Sunday and rest."

Harry nodded, barely holding back the smudge grin on his face as he passed through the door that led to the Ravenclaw's common room.

Entering the room, he had expected the usual. Some people studying, others instead 'cracking' up on Newts and Owls a bit 'strangely' and a couple more talking in a hush tone near the fire.

He hadn't expect a table with a small depiction of Hogwarts, and a seventh year with a bronze and blue bandana tied around his left arm enact the best representation of a Nazi officer as he explained the plans to a group of enraptured Ravenclaws.

"And that is why I hereby ask all of you to always walk in groups. Do not stray alone from the paths alright? We're coordinating with the other prefects and sixth years, but until we get this situation under control, no acts of heroism!"

"We do not award purple hearts, but will gladly take points!" One of the sixth years gladly 'roared', "The Flock of Ravens shall never be culled! We protect our own!"

Alright. Harry was at a loss once more.

Were they starting a magical party for him?

"Oh, our King has arrived!" A sixth year commented while pointing at him as another one began to bawl his eyes out from the stairs.

"Rooster is gone! He isn't in his cage!"

"Darn! They already got a victim!" One of the third years suddenly yelled, "We must have our revenge! It's the bloody Gryffindors!"

"Yeah!"

"I say it's the Slytherins." Another voice pulled in, belonging to Clearwater. "The Chamber of Secrets was supposedly built by Salazar, wasn't it? And the Heir is challenging the fake King. So it's the Heir of Slytherin challenging the king of crows!"

King of crows? Harry made a mental note to never, if ever, let Draco choose his nickname for messages. Still there was no way people around here would believe that now, would they? The Slytherins had surprisingly cleaned themselves quite a bit. There hadn't been a rumor about...

"It could have been a scheme." A voice pointed out. Oh no. Please no.

"Yeah, they act like good guys for one year and the next they end up unleashing Salazar's pet from the chamber! Some say it's able to kill on sight."

Who, Watson? It's just an adorable snake...If Harry had any thoughts on speaking that out loud, he of course was going to squash them down like stupid bugs.

It was, in a certain way, ironic.

In the end the Ravenclaw's cold logic settled once more on a 'doubt anything that isn't a fellow housemate' routine. Instead of pointing fingers and accusing, they would just do that...and Basileus was apparently handing over to his co-studying classmates and all the lower years a bunch of whistles.

"Remember! Whistle out loud if anything that isn't normal comes your way."

"What does that mean?" Michael suddenly asked. "Isn't this a bit excessive too? It's just a prank right?"

"Well, I don't know Michael: do you think that playing it safe is bad, or what? You can try and be creative and whistle a funeral march while walking alone. The last time the chamber opened, Ravenclaw lost a student." Basileus spoke slowly, "So no, nothing is excessive. Listen to me and listen well: for all purpose and effects, consider this a war declaration. If it's just a bad joke or prank, then we'll laugh about how exaggerated our reactions were but if it isn't, then we have rules to follow. Nobody acts like a prick, an idiot or an imbecile. I swear to the gods and to whatever there is up above that stupidity will be repaid by personally lowering the number of points to minus five thousands! And I am not joking. Points mean nothing compared to life." It was probably the tone that made Harry shiver slightly.

It was as if he really preached those words.

"And since our 'King' is getting the joy of being the target," Basileus commented, "I saw we can be his pawns and..."

"No." Harry exclaimed, suddenly getting the attention of the rest of the common room. "No pawns."

"Why not?" Basileus queried, shrugging lightly as he did so, "A king needs subjects."

"I'd rather have friends." Harry mumbled.

He hadn't expected the 'aws' and of course he didn't receive any. A couple of students snickered at his words, while others merely held awry smiles on them. Basileus merely shrugged, before moving straight in front of Harry and presenting his hand for a handshake.

"I am Artos Basileus Sfor, my wand is fifteen inch long Yew with a core of dragon heartstring, and as your friend, I kindly suggest you spend tomorrow studying about the complexity on transfiguration mechanics when applied to a moveable object: it helps greatly when considering the..."

And then he was shoved aside as another student presented himself, and then another one. By the end of the hour, Ravenclaw tower was filled with grim and determined people to see only one thing through: the capture of the culprit.

Neville

He was still debating.

He could write to his grandmother of course.

He could write to someone. He could warn the press. He could give an anonymous tip at the DMLE.

He could do a lot of things...and yet he was in Hufflepuff's common room, sitting on a warm and fuzzy sofa, and trying to piece together the reason why the room was filled with noise.

The chatter was all about that afternoon's events. All about the prank that had turned slightly sour and the flying of spells just as soon as Harry had entered the common room.

Neville hadn't managed to get a hold of the Ravenclaw long enough to try and understand why he just couldn't call his grandmother, if not speak to the Headmaster himself, and get Bellatrix taken care of for the Crucio charges on a minor. Yet Neville knew better than to

just charge in...he needed to know Harry's version, at the very least to be able to understand what was going on.

"So what is it going to be? Slytherin against Ravenclaw?" A voice belonging to Hannah Abbott asks, "Are they going to fight each other in the corridors now?"

"I hope not." Susan Bones remarks, "I mean...we were all getting along, I'd hate it if they started fighting again."

"Should we pick a side?" A boy offhandedly remarked of the higher years, talking to another older one.

"Is there any side to begin with? It's just a bad prank and we're overreacting." The other one replied, "And I've got Newts to worry about."

"Neville, you're friends with Harry aren't you?" The female voice made him blink and turn around, to face Leanne. The girl had been friends with a Gryffindor for the first year, and she was apparently finally coming out from her sulky attitude for having to 'fight' the house of the braves.

"Yes." The boy replied without much thinking, suddenly realizing people were now looking at him.

"Did he tell you what's going on?" The girl asked once more, pressing as if she wanted to drive home some sort of point. Warily, Neville shook his head slowly.

"So what...what if it's revenge on him for what he did? There are rumors he's been making the Slytherin act good so he can then push all of them against the Girl-Who-Lived. You know his real surname is Potter? He's that girl's brother and he's been disowned!"

Neville blinked.

Then he began to wrack his head around what the girl was saying.

Harry...was Lillian's brother? And how did the girl know that?

"Leanne! Are you sure?" Susan asked suddenly, sensing gossip just like the rest of the Hufflepuffs.

"Yes! My source is really trustworthy!" The older girl quickly remarked, "She also said that the prank has been started by the boy himself, so he can gather followers and become a dark lord by the time he gets out of school."

Now on that, Neville was about to retort...but he stopped.

He clenched his fists and stood up, and then marched straight towards the door.

"Longbottom! Where are you going!?" Hannah asked worriedly.

"To ask him of course!" Neville replied hotly, "Instead of gossiping we should try and find out if it's true or not right?" And then he swung open the door of the common room.

He hadn't expected to come face to face with the crux of the problem.

Harry stood there, a bit haunted in his looks but otherwise unfazed, looking around as if he was expecting to be attacked at any moment.

"Harry?" Neville croaked, "How...I mean...nobody knows where Hufflepuff's common room is!"

"What? Harry's out there Neville?!" A voice came from within.

"One good thing of being a Scamander, Neville." Harry remarked with a low chuckle, "Is that legally, I am inserted among the descendent of Helga Hufflepuff. So of course I'm privy to where your common room is. Add to that that the portraits and the ghosts of Hogwarts love me, and trust me: there isn't a room I can't find in the castle...or one I can't enter."

"Oh." Then Neville was suddenly pushed forward, as someone from behind tried to force their way out too. Hadn't it been for Harry quickly grabbing him, Neville would have probably ended up face first on the floor. The Hufflepuff prefect, Gabriel Truman, emerged straight from behind the fake barrel that made the common room of Hufflepuff difficult to find or enter.

"Scamander? What the hell are you doing out here!" The boy remarked drily, "You've got someone out for you at school and you're dillydallying here of all places?"

"I have a bit of a discussion with Neville ongoing, sir." Harry's reply was strangely meek, after starting out strongly, "If I could just talk to him in private for a while?"

"Longbottom?" The prefect turned to stare at Neville, withholding any possible replies to Harry to begin with.

"It is true sir," he replied quickly, "It's long overdue too. Won't take much I hope."

"Be careful then." The prefect nodded, reentering the common room. "And Scamander: if I catch you inside the common house of Hufflepuff, there will be hell to pay." And then he merely entered without saying another word.

"Don't mind him." Neville muttered, "He got into a fight with a Ravenclaw prefect in third year...didn't like the Ravens since then."

With a nod, Harry began to walk with him towards a seemingly normal wall.

"Oh right...wait a moment Neville." The boy remarked slowly, before passing through the door and...hissing something?

"Alright, come right through and mind your step!" The next moment, Neville tumbled through a strange rocky surface that apparently ended with a small ramp. Walking slowly through it, he heard the sound of a door closing behind him, and the next moment, he stood upon a stone walkway as the stone ramp removed itself by reentering the wall.

All around him, he could see water and strange carved faces of a bearded man.

"Harry?" He asked awkwardly. "What is this place?"

The boy smiled, as he developed a nasty sort of grin.

"This, my dear Neville...is the chamber of secrets."

Severus

"You call this solving the problem!?" Snape yelled, pointing his finger at the voice.

"Oh please. It's going to work."

"Sure, because giving weapons to children is such a grand plan!"
The potion master snorted

"Speaks the one who started it all?"

"I gave him a potion book! An old book with a couple of notes!"
Severus remarked drily. "You're upping the ante!"

"Who? Me?" The voice chuckled. "But Severus! I am doing all that needs to be done. Better to have him ready for the end of the year, right?"

"So...you know who's attacking him?"

"I've got half an idea." The voice pointed out, "But if it's true or not it doesn't matter."

"We should nip the bud from the beginning," Severus muttered before shaking his head. "Remind me...why no to the fiendfyre?"

"Because I'm adorable?" The voice coyly teased, "Or maybe because you're as likely to manage it as I am to rule the world."

"That's a pretty good chance." Snape murmured, before shaking his head slowly.

The cauldron was simmering in the dark room in the dungeons, as the noises and the creaking sounds echoed all around them.

"Don't speak of chances next to the Felix Felicis, Snape." The voice admonished, "You know it's disrespectful to destiny."

"I'll keep that in mind next time we're bailing someone out of the continent."

The voice merely chuckled.

Harry

Well, he had hoped Neville would have taken the news slightly better.

He was currently blabbering and on his ass on the floor, saying things like 'bloody hell' and 'you're the heir' and 'oh god Salazar's ghost' and similar.

Harry sighed, before walking closer to the boy quietly, and offering him a hand.

"Come on, we've got a lot to talk about, Neville...And we don't have much time." The Hufflepuff was positively flustered at being forced to stand up again, but he did get back a bit of composure by the time he realized nobody was going to eat or kill him.

"This is the chamber of secrets?" Neville's question hung in the air, the cold air of the chamber, as the water rippled slowly around them.

"A bit humid, I admit." Harry remarked with a slightly teasing tone. "You should see it in her best days, but that's not what I wanted to discuss with you."

Neville tensed, before slowly nodding.

"Right. Why can't I warn anyone?"

"Because, young Hufflepuff, that would mean Harry's death." Newton Scamander's appearance floated through the wall, soon followed by the Grey Lady and the Bloody Baron. Neville tensed slightly at the sight of the Slytherin's ghost, and his gaze travelled from him to Harry and then backwards.

"You're really related to Salazar." He squeaked out, getting a raised eyebrow from Harry.

"The lineaments..." Neville pointed out, as both Henry and Harry looked at one another blinking for a second.

"That's what worries you?" Harry asked curiously, "Not even about my possible death by Dumbledore's hand?"

Neville gasped at that, before exclaiming.

"How does that relate to Bellatrix using the Crucio on you!?"

Harry sighed. He knew this time around he had to answer.

"For some reason I know not of, the Headmaster wishes to use me as bait to get Voldemort out in the open." He explained, "That's why he's keeping me under check around the castle. Unluckily for him the castle has a will of its own, and even though the portraits answer to him, there isn't a 'fixed' time of reply. So they simply don't answer when they should." Harry chuckled, "He's the Headmaster and he's getting trounced by a second year."

"A second year aided by three ghosts all remarkably powerful in their ages." Henry scoffed, "Never forget humility, young Raven."

"Yeah alright." Harry rolled his eyes as he replied with a bit of cheek and a small grin on his face. "Anyway, if you get Bellatrix on the Crucio stuff, then Dumbledore would arrest her, claim me back to the Potters, and then proceed to Obliviate me on a daily basis, probably to mold me in another dark lord on the rise and then kill me to get more fame and power." His gaze turned somber at the thought, "Technically, I spent some time practicing Occlumency this summer, and Bellatrix gave me a sort of code to use if I get my mind 'smashed' while in the same room as the Headmaster. Supposedly activates a portkey on my person." The boy tapped to his shoulder's crest of a Hufflepuff's emblem.

"But Hogwarts has anti-apparition wards." Neville pointed out.

"Not for me Neville." Harry chuckled, "As a flesh, blood and magic descendant of one of the founder's line, I can go pretty much where I want. If I wanted to, I could waltz into any common room without knowing the password. Call them 'nobility privileges' or stuff like that."

"So...why can't we call the ministry? You can't tell me you're going to spend Christmas with that woman Harry!"

Neville's exclamation was met with a surprisingly vocal Helena.

"Of course he won't!" The Grey Lady remarked hotly, "We're planning on some sort of ruse to keep him in the castle. Something like...expanding his connections or some other bullshit that the Slytherin scum digs."

"I take offense of that!" Henry yelled, "You could at least have a bit of tact."

"Tact? Me!? Someone's trying to kill Harry and you think 'tact' is going to work? Last time I knew it had to be a Slytherin, but this time around I'm not staying around doing nothing: if this guy is a parseltongue too, then all the more the reason to look for him quickly and ruthlessly."

Neville slowly walked next to Harry, whispering as he looked at the two ghosts of Slytherin and Ravenclaw bicker while Newton kept a quiet approach to the matter.

"Is that normal for them?"

"Oh yes it is," Harry replied with a small awry smile, "In any event...what are you going to do now?"

Neville didn't speak immediately, preferring to close his eyes to ponder the question for a while probably, and then he began to slowly pace nervously.

He was probably conflicted. On one side he'd be avenging his parents, but on the other he'd be condemning another child like him. Yet he was being offered the choice.

Neville wasn't actually thinking that, had Harry actually been on a mean 'dark lord' streak, he could have kept the Basilisk there ready to fight, he could have learned the Obliviate spell or he could have just killed the boy and left his body to rot in the chamber forever.

But Harry wasn't evil, and he wasn't even thinking about what he could actually do to the boy if he refused...actually, out of the two, Harry was the one most nervous about what would happen.

"I'll...I'll think of something." Neville muttered, "I won't tell, but if...if it's for your own health, then I will. Alright?"

Harry blinked, before slowly nodding.

"Now...how do we get out of here?" The boy asked uneasily.

Harry smiled, gesturing for the Hufflepuff to follow him out of there through the 'unofficially official' exit room to the second floor, where the ghost of Moaning Myrtle was still staying there, frozen.

"Is that normal?" Neville asked, pointing at the ghost.

"Oh yeah, Watson took care of her apparently." Harry shrugged.

"Watson?"

"My familiar."

"Your owl?"

"No. My basilisk."

Harry felt a light thud hit the floor a few steps later.

Harry turned.

There, on the ground sprawled and fainted...was Neville.

Apparently, the chamber had been enough to drive him to the edge, and the mention of a basilisk...well, can't have everything in life.

Harry just hoped that, whoever it was that was out for his blood, would come out sooner than later...and he was still wondering why the Headmaster hadn't already called for his mother...but then again, why would he deliver a reason to Bellatrix to march into the castle again? As long as he didn't enter the nursery, apparently...Dumbledore would not call for his mother.

Author's notes

Chapter's a 'transition' one.

I wonder if the next one will reach Halloween or not...well, one can hope, right?

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals 9

"I told you so." The single sentence made Harry's nerves flinch together with his eyebrows, as the Bloody Baron was carefully hovering over the last visible remains of what once was a wooden mannequin. "The wood is not the best material to try the spell at first, but we have to work with what the room gives us."

Bits and pieces of fire burned all around the small area where a bomb had seemingly set off, and they were casting eerie pale green lights as they did so.

"It is swish then flick...alright..." Harry mumbled, before readjusting his grip on his wand. "Excudo!"

A flicker of red departed from the tip of the boy's wand, heading straight for another mannequin made of wood. As it touched the chest, it slowly began to rip as if a whirlpool had begun forming within its insides, and then, as the tension grew against the wooden surface, it splintered and broke.

The next instant the whirlpool effect reversed, sending the same amount of strength in the opposite direction and detonating the mannequin. The small wooden shards fell harmlessly to the sides of the wooden construct, avoiding both the front and the back of the room.

"Remember to firmly stop the movement when you pronounce the 'Do', Harry." Henry pointed out. "It adds to the range of the lateral width."

The Room of Requirement's door slowly creaked open just as soon as the ghost of Slytherin disappeared into invisibility. Harry's eyes narrowed as he spun around, wand in hand, only to stop at the sight of Neville entering the room and closing the door behind him.

"Neville."

"Harry."

A comfortable looking sofa materialized in few seconds, and as Neville sat there taking out his notes for Astronomy, Harry merely began to let his wand twirl around.

"Are you sure you don't want to..."

"No Harry." Neville deadpanned. "I am not coming with you to the chamber to speak to a giant basilisk."

"He's a really good snake, you know?" Harry retorted, "He didn't even mean to kill that poor student...he was just forced."

"That doesn't make it a compelling argument, Harry." The Hufflepuff huffed, as a small table appeared in front of him, to aid him in displaying his notes and read them better.

"It's been weeks: I hoped you would have calmed down." Harry replied with a dry chuckle, "I see him every day and I'm still alive."

"You're also the bloody descendant of Salazar, Harry." Neville's reply was brief, "And the basilisk is your familiar to begin with."

"Details."

"Oh yeah...just a 'giant' little detail of scales and fangs."

"Like your friendly man eating plants back at home?" Harry queried with a light smile tugging at the corner of his lips.

"Those were gifts alright? And they aren't fed humans to begin with!" Neville mumbled embarrassedly, "Can't believe I told you that last Friday and you're still holding it up to me."

"What? We were discussing dangerous and lethal magical creatures, then you had to go on a 'Flower Power' crusade like a Hippie, and of course you had to speak of man eating plants."

"You make it sound as if they're some sort of wicked thing."

"Nah...It's just kind of eerily similar to the Jumanji film."

"Right...you think we could ever get a television in here?" Neville asked, "I'd like to see what the fuss is with muggle programs."

"Uhm...I don't know...I mean, I think radios are fine but concerning television..." As Harry lost himself in thoughts, his ears suddenly picked up noise coming from one of the sides of the room.

One of those antique movie projectors that usually went with the old film around the metallic circle had suddenly sprouted from the ground, and it was projecting images on the now completely white side of the wall.

Apparently, a comfortable pair of armchairs now could give both of them the possibility to watch...BBC news.

"On other news, the weather today will remain cloudy in all of northern England, while..." The voice of the weathercaster came from the sides of the room, as Neville hurriedly began to look around nervously, before shyly waving at the woman on the screen. Was he really thinking she could answer or see him?

"Oh hello Madam, how..."

"Ireland will suffer from bouts of cold that..."

"Harry? Is that a tv?" Neville asked then, eying the film projector.

"No, but the programming is from one. I think the room found a way to go against the restrictions of magic and technology...which brings me up to another point though..."

By then he had already lost Neville to the wonders of television programming...so he could try and work it out on his own. He began to pace on the other corner of the room, thinking hard about the greatest thing he had wanted to have and that he required to possess...well, not really, but still it would have been a great perk actually.

A few steps later, a solid jet black case appeared on the side of a desk, a desk that held a chair, a keyboard, a mouse, a monitor...and the monitor was flicking open with...

Wizdos 1992.

He fist pumped into the air with an excited scream of joy, eliciting an actual turning around of Neville who stared perplexed at the strange contraption conjured by the room of requirements.

"I've got a computer! Finally! Yes! All hail the might of wizardry! Finally!"

Harry began to cackle like a madman, since having spent at the very least an entire year and half without one, without the wonders of Wikipedia and the internet, without games and the likes...that had made him a bit saddened...but now it was back.

Now he had technology back to him!

Then of course, Wizdos 1992 asked for the account name and the password.

Harry blinked.

"Well..." He muttered.

Harry Dursley.

Zergftw.

Password Incorrect.

"Alright..."

Harry Scamander.

Room of Requirements.

Password Incorrect.

"Damn." He mumbled, before slowly opening up the desk's drawers hoping to find anything helpful, but ending up with nothing. With a bit of insight, he slowly began to circle around the black case of the pc, moving it to the side and finally finding what he had been looking for.

A small slip of paper was attached behind the case, and scribbled upon them were the words.

Architect.

Hogwarts.

With a sigh of relief, he sat once more down on the chair and began typing in the username for the account and the password, receiving a heartily approval from the computer, that began to wheeze and make the typical noise of a booting up completely pc; one whose fans need to be oiled and cleaned, of course.

The screen popped up a normal desktop, with the usual icons that one would find by default, if only a bit 'wizardry'.

Incendio Bin – Magic Explorer – Parchment and Quills – Wizardry Office

Harry swiftly clicked on the parchment and quills section, finding himself exploring the various directories which were, of course, completely devoid of anything. The room had indeed created a computer, but it was one who worked because it had to, not because it had been 'programmed' to work.

Thus it was probably completely magical, and would work because it was being ordered to. Even the noise was probably generated by what he deemed was the correct amount of noise a pc made when booted up, just like his own had once done before.

"Let's see." Harry muttered, clicking on the 'internet' explorer that was instead a 'magic' explorer.

That was the moment he groaned. Even with internet, it wasn't as if he could magically make his usual games appear, right?

Apparently, the room disagreed.

The Magic Explorer beeped, as it displayed the Ultima trilogy series and begun the installation procedure even without input from Harry.

The next moment, of course, Harry had already started playing and leaving Neville to watch his programs.

Technology had reached Hogwarts...and instead of planning on how to better use it, the Ravenclaw student merely took the time to get back the lost hours of online playing...he was a Zerg player after all.

Lillian

She was pacing furiously in front of the library, halfway biting her lips nervously as she tried to come up with a reason good enough to meet with Harry. She needed to know if the wild rumors and accusations concerning him were true or not, because nobody, in the entirety of Hogwarts, knew just where the hell her brother disappeared to after the lessons.

The Ravenclaws were a mere wall of silence, mostly because they too had no clue to begin with. The common opinion shifted with the Hufflepuff knowing and hiding the 'King' as if he was a chess piece to protect, to those who claimed there would be an outright bloodbath before the end of the school year and that Harry was preparing an army.

Finally, she decided to go with the 'Defeat Voldemort' plan that her mother had suggested her to use on him. Since they had both been there when Voldemort had been defeated, then it was obvious that he too was the 'Boy Who Lived', or an extremely lucky one to have survived without a scratch, while she had a scar to prove it on her left hand...Having finally found her courage after a couple of pointy stares from the portraits outside of the library, Lillian walked inside.

A quite big enough group of Ravenclaws stood seated in a corner, while in the middle of the room the Slytherin apparently remained by themselves, as the Gryffindors were warily muttering one among the others near the fire as the Hufflepuffs were instead scattered throughout the remaining smaller tables.

All houses had decided to stick for themselves until the culprit came out, and that had destroyed what little spirit of uniformity the first year had brought around.

Her eyes settled with a wary gaze upon one of the Ravenclaw prefects, one who was Harry's friend at the very least, and then she began to slowly walk towards them.

She knew she was walking through a powder keg ready to explode actually, the simple fact that all of the school had begun to use the library as a meeting point after a few weeks from the event was a clear sign that things would eventually detonate.

She just had to get through her 'Defeat of Voldemort' day, and hope that this Halloween would not personally account to any strange event of sorts. What she hadn't expected, as soon as she took one more step, was for a volley of wands to rise and meet her straight ahead.

The Slytherin and the Hufflepuff factions took out their wands instant later. The Gryffindors suddenly stood up and did the same, and suddenly, in the library, the wands were all out and ready.

Madam Pince wasn't present in person, but the assistant librarian was and was currently getting beneath her desk, feeling the tension spark in the air.

"Lower your wands Ravenclaws!" A Hufflepuff prefect ordered, only for Basileus to reply with a light grin.

"We can find the culprit far faster with this method." The Ravenclaw remarked. "We came up with this plan, you see: tension makes people do stupid things. To determine the house, all we need to know is who would strike first during an increase in tension...like this one. So no: we ain't lowering the wands." The red haired boy snapped back, as Percy Weasley instead waited a few minutes, before lowering his own weapon.

"Then lower your wands, Gryffindors. Let's show them we are not the culprits of this...prank farce." As the Gryffindors shuffled to obey, the Slytherins soon followed, leaving in the end only the Hufflepuffs and the Ravenclaws staring at one another.

With a light huffing noise, both placed their wands back at the same moment.

"Alright, what do you need?" Basileus asked easily, as if the previous five minutes of tension hadn't even existed to begin with.

Lillian blinked, before sheepishly mumbling.

"Well...Could you ask Harry if he's free on the thirty-one of October for lunch?"

"Writing him a letter is too difficult?" Basileus remarked with another question.

"You don't have to be such a prat!" Ron suddenly exclaimed, having in the meantime walked to get behind Lillian, probably in some sort of chivalrous attempt that didn't quite work...especially when the red haired boy was suddenly on the floor due to Hermione's quick wand-casting.

"Sorry for him." The bushy brown haired witch replied slowly, grabbing a hold of the boy and starting to pull him away from the scene.

Basileus raised an eyebrow at the scene, but then returned to stare at the Girl-Who-Lived.

Lillian merely bit her lip even more, before finally relenting.

"He doesn't answer them, and I need an answer. Please?"

"Well, with the magic word said, who am I to say no?" Basileus smiled lightly, before slowly getting back to his seat, "I'll have him reply to you by curfew hour."

"Thanks!"

"Silence in the library!" The librarian chastised, having regained her courage by the time all the wands had gone down. Lillian embarrassedly lowered her head at the admonishment, before walking out quickly.

She was going to the try-outs for the Quidditch team, and this time, as an official trial, there was no way she wouldn't get the position.

Even if last year had been an apparent 'extraordinary circumstance' this year would be the real deal. She would enter the team and fly. Nobody would be able to yell favoritism then, right?

Of course nobody would.

She stopped as she reached the pitch. The Quidditch team wasn't there, but a notice that cancelled all types of extracurricular activities was. It had to have been freshly minted, because it explained without a shred of doubt that, following an attack in the kitchens that had killed half of the house elf staff, the school would be in lockdown.

She shivered. She had just left the library, probably nobody knew about it then, but if so...where did the Quidditch team end up going? In the locker room?

She slowly walked around the pitch, heading towards the lockers and opening them in the hope that the team had simply been in the process of changing, but when she saw there was no-one, she merely began to walk back towards the castle.

It was as she walked past the common hallway, that she felt herself being observed.

She slowly came to a halt, perplexed at the soft muffled sound of steps coming in from behind her. She quietly started to walk once more, grabbing from within her robes the parchment that was the Marauders map and that her father had gifted to her for her second year of school...

"I solemnly swear that I am up to no good." She intoned slowly, as the map opened in front of her. She looked at the blinking dots immediately, finding hers walking through the corridor, while just around the corner was...

Tom Riddle.

Speaking with a...

Gellert Grindelwald.

She blinked at the map.

It...it had to be wrong after all: the map could make mistakes then, no matter what her father had told her. There was no way that both Lord Voldemort and Gellert Grindelwald, two of the darkest lords ever to have lived, could be at school at Hogwarts right behind the corner she was just then turning. It was an impossible feat. It was utterly and outright maddening to even think it could be true...and as

her mind was reeling in the shock, she heard steps behind her. She quickly looked down on her map then again, and the name she saw...Some things were just...impossible, right?

She stopped. She stopped there just short of turning the corner, and then took a deep breath to try and scream.

It was enough for a pair of hands to wrap around her mouth, and a softly spoken word to reach her ears.

"Obliviate."

Harry

"I feel strangely at ease now." Harry commented as he sat for dinner, a smile plastered on his face as he grinned and grinned without pause. "Feeling really smooth too," he added.

"What happened?" Michael asked, curious at his housemate's strangely content face.

"Oh nothing...I managed to do something I haven't done for a long time..." Harry offhandedly remarked, not realizing just what he was implying until...

"You polished your wand?" Basileus whispered.

"You choked the chicken?" Michael grinned as he asked that.

"You...blew the flute?" Another Ravenclaw, friend of Michael, asked.

"You grabbed the sausage?" A third one entered this seemingly strange game of asking strange questions.

"What?" Harry asked after a moment of hearing remarks similar to that going around, "What are you talking about!?"

"Well, you are a healthy male boy I suppose." Basileus explained, "And I suppose as a Prefect, it is my sworn duty to give you the 'Talk'. Unless you prefer I ask Miss Clearwater to do it?"

"The...Talk?" And then Harry sputtered, turning probably red as he understood just what those...those perverts were talking about. "You...you're perverts!"

"We're just...yanking your chain Harry," Michael pointed out, "No need to...flip up." More bellowing laughter ensued, until it finally died out long enough for everyone to have their go at their dinner.

"Oh right!" Basileus exclaimed suddenly, "Harry...your 'sister' told me to ask you if you were free the thirty-first, there's..."

"I'm not." Harry's reply was curt, quick and to the point. "I'm busy."

"At lunch you're busy?" Basileus deadpanned, narrowing his eyes on him.

"Incredibly so." The boy remarked with a quick nod. "I have duties after all: find the culprit and smash him against a couple of walls."

"You know you should leave that to the professors or the prefects, right?" Basileus remarked, before turning thoughtful, "Well, just tell her no then."

Harry's eyes moved to the professors' table for a moment, before his head slumped down and slowly began to shake.

"I suspect it's not going to be that easy."

James Potter had slowly made his way towards the Ravenclaw table, a strange smile on his face that menaced dangerous things if offended. Harry just had a hunch it was that kind of smile you receive before someone makes you an offer you cannot refuse.

"Tomorrow at lunch, Mr. Scamander, I'd be delighted to have a chat with you in the privacy of my office."

"But sir, I'm-"

"No buts." James shook his head quickly. "I'll be waiting for you then." And then the man turned around and left the premises of the table, leaving a grumbling Harry to suffer through the reminder of the dinner. It was as the boy was taking a bite of cheesecake, that

explosions rocked through the air as a feral and disgusting odor surrounded the dining hall.

"It's Peeves! I knew he was preparing something!" Argus yelled out loud, just as the laughing poltergeist ran through the hall with cackling glee...apparently having emerged from the frozen stasis the Basilisk had put him in.

"I'm late! Late for a party of dung bombs and more!" The poltergeist remarked giggling madly, "It is time for a song! A really good song concerning a secret! A secret chamber and a secret room!"

The Bloody Baron tackled Peeves in midair just then, ending with both of them to pass through the stone walls and disappear from the room.

Mentally, Harry was cheering for the Bloody Baron to win.

A twinge of guilt made its way through Harry's chest. Technically the basilisk was a murderous creature, and technically speaking he was harboring a 'wanted' criminal.

However it wasn't as if it would change anything, if he kept Watson safe now, would it?

In the midst of the dense brown 'fog' that Harry was keeping in mind was peanut butter, and certainly not 'dung' because no, a human mind can only take that much stress before cracking, he felt something small grab onto his leg.

The next moment he felt himself being lurched into the air.

He screamed as he began to fall downwards, the sky now actually crystal clear and visible in its might and...and he was falling in the lake.

He was falling in the damn lake outside of Hogwarts!

His arms moved fast to cover his face, as in that moment he could do nothing more than scream and hope for help. This had to be Peeves' prank to him, but this...this was going to kill him!

The water's black and murky surface came closer far too fast for Harry's intentions. As tears began to streak down his eyes in wait for the strong hit he'd certainly make against the lake's surface, he began to remember the happy times he had spent with his family, his real family. Now he knew what people meant, when they said that in the last moment of one's life, one sees their entire life flash in front of them.

He was going to die, becoming nothing more than a splat against the lake and even if he did survive the impact, he'd get all his bones smashed and die by drowning...or end up eaten by the giant squid.

"WINGARDIUM LEVIOSA!"

A strong jerking sensation pulled him upwards, knocking the wind out of his lungs as he gasped for air, thin streaks of smoke enveloping him and apparently being visible through the Invisible cloak. Covering his clothes was smoke, a light greyish smoke that seemed nothing more than mist, but that however held itself throughout his body. Some sort of smoke-like armor apparently, that...was that making him levitate?

He took a deep breath before getting a hold of his wand.

The pull stopped and he began to fall once more.

"Wingardium Leviosa." Harry muttered with relief as he slowly lowered himself down towards the ground, this time being perfectly in control. He had no idea if it had been a bout of accidental magic or not, but he knew that his life was safe thanks to that. As his feet touched the ground, they gave away trembling and he collapsed on the grass breathing hard and quick. His hands were trembling. He had risked death. A horrible type of death that...that he could relate to...

Maybe that was why people had been so extremely nervous from the beginning. He had grown up with muggles: throwing colored light balls wasn't something scary to him. Sure, he knew their power, but they didn't look scary at all. Light blue, red, light green, green, orange and the likes were colors. This...this teleporting him high above in the sky and then letting him plummet to his death? This was a type of death he could relate with.

"You must leave Hogwarts, Harry Scamander." A voice called to him from the shadows of the nearby trees. It felt squeaky and belonging to a small creature of sorts. "If you do not, you will die."

"TRUDO!" Harry roared with his anger and hatred fueling his second wind, as he stood back on one knee and flung a volley of ethereal lance-shaped weapons at the voice, "EXCUDO! CUSPIS TERRAE! COME OUT YOU BASTARD! YOU SON OF A ..."

And then the ground in front of him shook and trembled, before detonating in dangerous magical rock shrapnel that flung all around, not caring for friend or foe. Some sharp shards pierced deeply into Harry's clothes, small dribbles of blood dripping downwards as a consequence, but the trees near the lake appeared to have been uprooted and shredded far worst.

"Where are you!?" Harry roared, "COME OUT! Let's be done with it! Face me you coward!" He yelled, his throat turning parched as he finally collapsed again from the effort. "Face me. Just...finish this. Coward...bastard..."

Harry's throat itched, as sobs made him tremble on the grass. He had been so happy mere hours ago, grinding up levels and battling through stuff...and now he was once more fighting.

What a stupid thing to do, to believe he had been left off the hook by the mysterious person...maybe he should do what he asked? Leave Hogwarts?

It wasn't as if there was only Hogwarts around now, was there?

But if he tried...if he tried to leave Hogwarts then where would he go?

And what would Bellatrix do to him if he did leave? Use the Crucio on him? Kill him?

And what if Dumbledore merely obliviated him and his desire to leave?

No...he had to remain and fight through it...

But he didn't want to. He wanted to do anything but that. He wanted to have a boring life school. Sure, maybe filled with friends, but not in this way...not with the risk of death looming around the corner.

Not with people actively seeking his death.

Harry did not know when he fell asleep, but he did know that he woke up in the chamber of secrets, being tended in Salazar's bed by...

"What are you doing in here?" He croaked in shock.

The girl bit her lower lip in sheer nervousness, before finally whispering back.

"I...I'm a parseltongue too."

And with that Harry blinked, because standing near his bed was none other than Lillian Potter, the Girl Who Lived and...apparently a parseltongue too.

"What are you doing here?" He stressed the last point, making damn sure it was the most worrying. "And why didn't Watson attack you?"

"He was the one to call for me." Lillian mumbled embarrassedly, lowering her gaze. "Well, actually he was yelling about you being wounded and...I kind of knew where to go by following his voice and then...here I am?"

Harry narrowed his eyes, staring at her.

"This is the supposedly Chamber of Secrets." Harry deadpanned. "It isn't much secret if people keep finding it."

"I'm not going to tell anyone else!" She blurted out quickly, "I swear it!"

Harry rolled his eyes with a light sigh. He wasn't of the mood to fight, as the memories of what had happened to him reeled back into his mind.

"Where's Watson now?" He asked quietly.

"The...The snake is kind of hovering over my head right now." Lillian mumbled, "You can't see it because of the bed's curtains but...he's looking at me kind of dangerously from the stone bridge up above us."

"He's a basilisk, Lillian." Harry commented, "And...Watson! No killing the girl!"

"Yes master...she's scrawny to begin with." The snake hissed slowly, "Tell me who did this, Master, and I will rip and shred his body to nothingness!"

"I am not scrawny!" Lillian hissed back, actually making a really funny face as she spoke in the snake language. "I'm fit for my age." She added after a moment as a defense, crossing her arms.

She was actually pouting against the Basilisk. Either she had no hint of self-preservation instinct or she was actually 'brave' to the point of stupidity.

It had to be one of the two of course.

It was then that Harry suddenly realized something.

"Watson...can I ask you a question?"

"Of course master, I am your most humble familiar." The basilisk replied smoothly.

"I realized your voice tone is the same as Lillian...are you...a girl?"

"I lay eggs master, if that is your question."

Harry slowly got up to a sitting position, staring owlshly at Lillian's widened eyes as probably she too had believed the creature to be a male.

"Oh." And then Harry slumped back down on the bed. "What time is it?"

"Past curfew." Lillian remarked.

"You shouldn't have bothered." Harry said, "You could have just dropped me here, you know?"

"No." The Gryffindor girl shook her head, "I didn't want to leave you alone. You've been alone long enough, haven't you?"

Harry did not reply to the question, but instead preferred to sigh.

"I...I know you didn't prank the ceiling...and now I know someone really wants you dead." Lillian whispered, "And...And I can't help but think that it's my fault that all of this is happening." She added, as tears began to slowly fall down her cheeks.

"Why would you say that?" He shifted on the bed to the side, in order to better look at his sister without having to turn his neck.

"Because...this summer I received a warning about not going to Hogwarts this year but I didn't hear it. When we didn't pass through the wall to the platform 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$ I knew something was wrong, but instead of taking the safe way and call my parents I followed Ron's idea of using his father's flying car...it was stupid, I know, but it wasn't like we thought much about it before doing it!" She exclaimed as if she was trying to defend herself from Harry's judgment, which wouldn't be given even if she had wanted to, because it wasn't something that mattered to him.

"So...so we hit the Whomping Willow and then...that same night I received another warning but I refused it, so the...the elf said he'd have to obey his orders and...and harm my family." She was now positively sobbing and crying at the same time, as she wailed 'it's my fault' repeatedly.

"Lillian." Harry whispered, a stray thought suddenly entering his mind. "Did you warn your parents?"

"Yes. But they said that house elves can't directly harm wizards." She replied, "And not to worry about it, but then look at you! He's harming you alright and it's my fault!"

"Did you catch the elf's name?" Harry asked quickly, trying to get the girl to change her focus of self-pity towards the more useful recollecting the important things.

The girl nodded meekly, before muttering.

"He said...his name had to be...Dobby."

Severus

"This has gone on long enough!" The man roared, as Dumbledore merely looked back at him apologetic. "Headmaster! We have to do something! First it was Harry, and now even Lillian is dropping off the radar at school! Even the Longbottom scion is taking lessons on entering the room of requirements." Severus muttered with half-clenched teeth. "And what about that Lockhart? He's a fool who doesn't know anything about 'muggle studies'. Only good at prancing around about fame and said he wants a dueling club to be made...like hell he'd..."

"An excellent idea." Dumbledore remarked idly, "I believe that by doing so, we might be able to catch all flies with the same stone."

"Headmaster?" Severus asked perplexed, "I think you meant two birds with a snare...not flies and stones...and no!" The man snapped back up in his flaring temper, "Gilderoy is as much a dueler as he is a monster exterminator: he can't even fight pixies for the love of Merlin!"

"This doesn't change things, Severus." Dumbledore pointed out. "We will personally trial Mr. Scamander for allegiance with the dark lord by the end of the school year. The prophecy will not come to pass if we can cut the boy down earlier, and we will not have to kill him. By knowing what he can do in a duel situation, we can make this much easier...and I will talk with professor Flitwick and get him to abort his extra training lessons with Mr. Scamander."

Severus seemed to be on the point of retorting, but the man held his tongue in check with a not so small amount of effort, before quickly nodding his head.

"Then I'll offer my services to fill the void and claim it to be Flitwick's idea. I will thus befriend him by appearing angered at your policies," the potion master enunciated, "and everything should be in the line for the end of the year."

"Indeed." Dumbledore nodded with a light grin, "And when Madam Scamander will arrive through the Flu on the last of the year, we will spring the mysterious 'curser' and get everything in order by faulting the woman. I expect everything to be carried out perfectly, Severus."

"Of course Headmaster." Severus replied smoothly, before slowly turning to leave.

"Everything will go as planned."

Author's notes

Apparently managed to squish a second update in the same day (At least for me that is, at precisely 23: 59!)

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals 10

"Dobby?" Harry asked curiously, "Dobby...that's a familiar name for sure." He replied as he thought it over. "But where did I hear it..."

Lillian didn't speak, instead slowly standing up to walk around the room, curiosity taking the better of her.

"You know, I was so worried about you I didn't even wait for dad or mom to come around. I just took off and followed the voice...pretty stupid, right?" She mumbled, "If the Bloody Baron hadn't been there, Watson would have eaten me..." She added, "But I mean, I couldn't just leave you could I?"

"Why didn't you bring me to the infirmary then?" He queried, perplexed. He didn't feel hurt, but then again he had suffered from just small rocks seeping in his skin...what could the damage possibly be about?

"Well...the Basilisk didn't seem too fond of letting me go."

"Watson? Why didn't you let Lillian go?"

"I prohibited it." Watson remarked flatly. Well...Wat-daughter. Wataughter, Water. Wat-her! "My master needed protection, I am his familiar. I did not trust the scrawny morsel with my master's trust or life. I keep an eye on the morsel and if she acts bad, I will eat her."

Lillian chuckled nervously, before grimly looking around one last time and then moving to the other side of his bed, where she sat down shyly.

"Alright then...there's no other way out until you can walk, and there's not another bed."

"Lillian?" Harry queried, eying the girl merely slumping on the bed with a loud 'crack' as she distended on the surface.

"The bed's so comfy! Just what is it made of!?"

"Master's bed is for master's use you scrawny morsel!" Wather...Weather...Heather hissed angrily.

"Oh come on! I'm tired and the bed is wonderful, what's filling it by the way?"

"Silk of Acromantula torn apart from the beasts' flailing bodies!"

"I strangely don't want to know anything about this room anymore." Lillian mumbled in parseltongue, getting a chuckle out of Harry.

"You're right...you should see the Dementor's drawing Salazar made on the desk...terrifying."

Lillian didn't reply except with a small giggle, before finally giving one sigh of relief and slowly closing her eyes.

"It's nice...this is what I've always wanted: someone to talk to who doesn't think I'm the Girl-Who-Lived and thus need to be treated with gloves, and someone I can be myself with...a brother. Harry...are you sure you can't..."

But he did not hear any of the following words, because instead he found himself walking through a forest, blood seeping down his sides as he held a sword in his right hand.

"Curse you." He hissed. "Curse you Arthur. Curse you Merlin. Curse you Godric. Curse you a hundred times Morgana. Curse you all to oblivion and beyond. Curse you...curse you..." He felt pain all over his body, a poison no doubt making its way through his entire body.

"Think you can wipe me out, erase my actions? Think you can act as if I was the bad guy...curse you...then you will learn." He mumbled that as he neared the lake, coughing out blood as he took the final steps to reach the water. "Take the sword and head my pledge. From Brimstone and blood I birthed you, and through pain and despair I have carved you. Iniura I thus call you. May he who wields my soul and the sword bring forth my vengeance, or may he be consumed by the darkness within!" And then, with his dying breath, the blade flew through the air shining, before landing deeply at the center of the lake.

"Mors in magicae et magia in morte." He mumbled one last time...and then he fell.

Harry woke up with his left arm completely numb, his body covered by a thick bed sheet, and small breathing sounds coming from his side. His eyes closed once more, the need to sleep far outweighing the will to find out what it was all about, when the mechanism to awaken him began to work.

He heard a sharp girlish scream from his side as he was flung through the air before gently landing on the stone bridge high above, in front of Slytherin's carved face. Apparently Lillian had fallen asleep on the other side of the bed, and was now scruffily trying to compose herself. She was still wearing the robes she had on the day before, and it was highly possible she had simply fallen asleep with them on the other side of the bed.

Her hair was completely ruffled and disheveled, as if she had slumped down in a bunch of leaves, to say the least.

"Don't bother." Harry cheerfully exclaimed after looking at her for a few moments, all bad or sad thoughts out of his mind, "There's a cheering charm cast on the all darn thing when we wake up! Smile and be happy!" And before Lillian could reply with yet a cheerful bout, both were tugged in through the dark tunnel that would lead them to the 'official' exit of the chamber, but not before having 'prepped' them for the day.

"Today's Saturday, right?" Harry mused out loud, as he came out completely freshened up and clean from the hidden passage in the unused room of the castle. His robes had changed color, becoming a soft green and black hue with a nice bronze and blue interlining, the symbols of Slytherin, Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw patched on his robes within a wider Hogwarts symbol.

Lillian merely wobbled outside while feeling a bit green. Her robes had been changed with dark red and black, and the symbol for Gryffindor stood at her chest height near her heart. She was smiling, but her hands were itching clearly from the desire to kill something or someone.

"I...Yes! Happy Halloween!" She was smiling, but behind her hazel eyes was some sort of promise of utter pain and murder for whoever had invented said diabolical contraption, "Nice clothes!" She exclaimed pointing at hers, "Where are the old ones though!?"

"Oh." Harry mumbled, his eyes gazing onto his sister's head. "That's going to be a problem."

"What?" The girl's hand went to touch her hair, slowly travelling down it until she grabbed a lock to bring in front of her eyes. The hair that had been cut, casket-like, and red was now once more long and a deep onyx black color. Lillian smiled, and Harry was grateful the cheering charm was still on the girl.

"Well...we should head down for breakfast shouldn't we?" The boy began, before taking a couple of steps backwards from his sister and starting to walk out of the room, only for Lillian to literally pounce and stop him by grabbing his arm.

"Wait!" The girl exclaimed worriedly, "We have to speak to Dumbledore about this! You've got to tell him about the basilisk and the attempted murder and...and everything else!"

Harry tensed slightly, eying his sister with disbelief-filled look. Of course he had been too taken by the fact that someone was actually trying to murder him to realize that his sister, Lillian Potter, was one of the few who believed that Dumbledore was the good guy. Furthermore the girl would be near Dumbledore eventually, of that he was sure...he had to find some way to keep her quiet.

He didn't want her or her family to get hurt, but...but he had no proof at all, and between words who would the people believe? Him, adopted by an ex Death Eater who was actually pretty much active, or Dumbledore, the hero of one war and the only man Voldemort feared?

There was little doubt on what would happen if the girl talked.

"Lillian." Harry whispered, "No." He added slowly.

"Why not?" She began to slightly tremble, "Do you believe in Voldemort's ideas!? Are you...are you a Death Eater?" She whispered at him, her hand suddenly going for her wand. "Look, I'm sure we can figure something out to get you to safety! You just have to trust mom and dad! They wouldn't..."

"Lillian, please." Harry whimpered, "You don't know what you're talking about." He added slowly, "Dumbledore is evil."

"Dumbledore, evil?" Lillian murmured, her right eyebrow shooting upwards as she clenched her wand firmly, "Oh...I see...it's the Imperius curse right? That's why you're acting like this...you're under Imperius." Harry blinked as suddenly his sister flipped his wand at him, yelling out loud.

"Verdimillious Duo!"

The bright green jet of energy departed from the wand, before impacting against the wall on the other side, missing Harry by a good length. Harry's own wand was out before he could think, and the spell was already on the tip of his tongue...but he stilled.

He couldn't...he couldn't kill his sister because of this!

"Trudo!" He blurted out, halfway convinced of the intention to kill, and because of that the attack was a mere blunt force, that rocked Lillian off her feet and against the wall. She screamed slightly, before falling on the ground. Her wand fell nearby, and swiftly Harry jumped to get it, before pointing them both at his sister.

"Please let me explain." He began, but Lillian, far stronger because of her Quidditch practice, merely wobbled back up and tried to dash for the door.

It was then that a swift tail motion encircled the girl, coming from the seemingly unscathed wall which held Salazar's secret exit. The Basilisk's head emerged with its fangs and its eyes promising murder.

"You dare harm my master! Betrayer! Murderer of Kin!"

"Stop!" Harry hissed, before the basilisk could actually eat Lillian whole...

"Master! Let me kill her, please! Rip her to shreds, destroy her, feast on her body!"

"Harry...please..." Lillian whimpered, "You have to fight it...The Imperius can be fought off..." The girl pleaded him, as if...as if she really believed that. There wasn't much of a choice, was there?

"Thankfully I walked by." The Bloody Baron mused, appearing in mid-air between the basilisk's head and Lillian herself. "Do not worry...I'll take care of this."

"Wait, what are..." Lillian's muttering was interrupted as the baron nodded to the Basilisk, before closing his own ghostly eyes. The next moment, Harry felt a wave of magic pass through him, but leave him unscathed...while against Lillian...

With a soft thunk, her paralyzed body fell on the ground completely limp.

"Well then." Henry remarked calmly, "This is what you get for trusting people like that, Harry." The Baron then hovered right in front of him, crossing his arms over his ghostly chest as he gestured for the Basilisk to leave.

"What did you do to her!?" Harry hissed, looking at the paralyzed in fright face of the girl. "Did you...kill her?"

He felt sick. He felt wobbly and woozy. The baron couldn't have...he wouldn't...he had a duty to protect the students of the school, didn't he?

"She's petrified. It will take Mandragora to get her back on her feet...and I know that until the end of the year the plants won't be able to be useable for making the anti-petrifying potion." Henry remarked quietly, "I have thus given you time enough to come up with a plan, or to return home and get a solution from that woman...albeit I would avoid that."

"And then what?!" He hissed, "This makes me look like the bad guy!" Harry muttered, pointing at the petrified body of his sister, "She doesn't even look like..." Harry blinked.

"She doesn't look like Lillian at all, does she?" He mused carefully.

"Harry?" The Baron queried, raising an eyebrow.

"Well...what I'm saying is: remove the robe, and she's just another witch who's petrified at first glance, right?"

"She has a scar on her hand that marks her as the Girl Who Lived." Henry pointed out, only for Harry to groan and raise his hands up in the air.

"I give up! Let's leave her in a corridor and someone will eventually find her!"

"That is not advisable, young Raven." Helena's words came just as the ghost appeared from the nearby wall, "Remember that portraits could actually tell Dumbledore who was carrying her...unless..."

"Unless?"

"Henry," Helena began, looking at the Bloody Baron, "Peeves could..."

"Peeves!? Again!?" Henry roared, "No! For the love of all that is Merlin no!"

"Young Raven," Helena muttered with a sigh, "Trust us and go to breakfast. We will take care of everything else." The woman then 'nudged' as a gesture Harry, who albeit a bit unsure, left the room quietly. He had to reach for breakfast and try and weather whatever consequences his nightly disappearance might have had.

He hadn't taken five steps in the common dining hall that he suddenly found himself surrounded by students and professors alike.

"Where the hell were you, you stupid idiot!?" The roar came from Neville, of all people, who had apparently grabbed him by the robes.

"Scamander!" Basileus yelled out once Neville finally got his anger out of his system, "Five hund..."

"Basileus! No removal of points by the hundreds!" Filius suddenly barged in, preventing the prefect from outright bringing Ravenclaw into the negatives.

"Professor! I said what my actions would have been against people who..."

"Harry!" Lily Potter barged through, "Have you seen Lillian? Please! She disappeared last night and we can't find her!"

"No, I..." Harry's words were muffled by the sheer chaos of his return...why were people that scared to begin with?

"Silence!" Dumbledore screamed through the use of magic, bringing once more silence into the dining hall. "Let the boy breathe, for Merlin's beard."

"Harry." James was the one to finally speak, after the area around him had emptied, "Where were you last night?"

"Outside near the lake." Harry blurted, "I was grabbed while inside the cloud and transported over the lake and then..."

"My boy, are you sure about it?" Dumbledore queried, "There are wards that prevent apparition throughout the castle." The silver haired man added carefully.

"I saved myself with a Wingardium Leviosa." Harry deadpanned, "I'm pretty sure I can discern when I'm falling to my death, Headmaster." He added with a light snort.

Lily gasped, bringing her hands to cover her mouth from the shock, before trying to fuss over the boy and check him for injury. Albus' wand however was already out, and with a simple gesture he prevented the woman from moving closer to the boy.

"I fainted nearly outright and woke up this morning...hanging from a tree I might add." He muttered, better to lay it thickly than not lay it at all, "Why the wand Headmaster?" He narrowed his eyes, his posture already changing into what professor Flitwick had told him to take when confronted: slightly sideways in order to minimize the possible hitting area, just like in fencing.

"Mr. Scamander, I find myself in need to examine your last memories...since Miss. Potter has disappeared too, I fear we are short on time in finding her, and for that I must resort to Legilimency, if you were to permit me..."

"I've found the Potty Potter!" Peeves yelled, roaring through the hall, "She's such a fun thing to doll!" The poltergeist added with a bright chuckle, before sending a conspiratorial wink to the student body, but Harry knew it was for him.

"Peeves!? Where is she?" James asked hotly, "Merlin help me I'm exorcising you if she's harmed!"

"Who? Me? Harm? No!" Peeves replied with snickers, "I made her fashionable! She wouldn't stay still, had to petrify her!"

"Peeves, I command you as Headmaster of the School, tell us where Miss. Potter is." Albus thundered, only for the poltergeist to look at him for a moment. Then, the ghost-like figure yawned and began to look at his ghostly fingers.

"Nope." The poltergeist chuckled. "Not a chance."

"Peeves, you are bound by the school to..." Dumbledore's words died in his throat, as he spun around and stared at Harry.

"Of course." The old wizard muttered, "Mr. Scamander, would you..."

"Nope again." The poltergeist chuckled, "You should study your school regulation better, Albus." The ghostly creature pointed out. "I am bound to protect the school's student population and work together with the Headmaster in such endeavor." Strangely, hearing Peeves of all people talk like that was surprisingly shocking, "I am by no means forced to comply with you and from what I heard you are indeed doing a poor job at protecting the students..." The ghost shook his head, "You know, some might say you've been a really naughty old man, isn't it?"

Albus narrowed his eyes, staring at the poltergeist who instead merely smiled back gingerly at the Headmaster.

"I am older than you, Albus." The poltergeist intoned, "So shut your trap you arrogant whelp of a toddler and get back to your seat for breakfast, or I will break you on your knees and spank you!" And to make his point, the poltergeist clapped his hands together before laughing wildly and leaving the hall.

"Wait!" Lily yelled, "Where's my daughter!?"

"Good hunt!" Peeves yelled straight back from the corridor he had taken to fly through, "Catch the treasure quickly!"

With a pretty ferocious snarl, James Potter began to dash through the hallways, soon followed by Sirius Black, the flying professor, and the assistant nurse Lily Potter. Many of the students resumed their incessant chattering, but one in particular stood up before walking right in front of Harry and eying him angrily.

"We need to talk." Draco hissed, "Care to eat with the Slytherins?"

"Mr. Malfoy ..." Dumbledore began gently, only for Harry to nod. "Five points to Slytherin for promoting school unity." The wizard said with a smile, before turning to head back to his seat, probably not worried any longer about Lillian's safety.

Harry sat down next to Flint and Vincent, with both Tracey and Daphne flanking Draco who was in front of him. For a moment, the Ravenclaw student waited for Draco's start of the conversation, but apparently having decided to stall it to the end of breakfast, Harry wasted no time in eating.

He had barely taken a bite of eggs that a strange taste touched his palate. It was like...

"Urgh...tomato?"

"I knew it!" Draco exclaimed with a grin, "I knew it had to be that!"

"What about?" He asked, perplexed.

"A charm on the dish: you don't have to bring the food to the chicken, only place a notice me not charm on the food, plop it down and then remove it afterwards...or leave it and let nature due its course!" Draco appeared to have been having a field day of sorts, for some sort of reason.

"Alright, could you explain now?" Harry queried, curious.

"The Weasley git accused Draco of having sent his house elf to harass him and the brat who lived," Flint remarked, "and then he had the galls to claim his elf was the source of also your problems. Since a house elf would fit as the mysterious murderer, especially..."

"Murderer?" Harry gulped down nervously a drop of water, "What about murders?"

"You...didn't hear?" Flint blinked as Vincent took the cue.

"The house elves in the kitchen...poor buggers, half of them are dead: they found out during the turn change...some say it was a scene from hell with blood and entrails everywhere."

"Trying to eat here guys." Harry muttered, his mind finally reeling in on who Dobby was.

Luckily he hadn't remembered the squeaky elf of the year before, or he might have reacted rudely to Draco in the beginning and not reach an answer to it...instead now he knew how it could have been done, and everything was fine.

"Yeah. I even asked him of course, and he told me he didn't do anything." Draco mused, "He even thought he was guilty of having led me to believe it and hit himself repeatedly...Had to stop him...he was starting to scare the other elves." The blond boy shook his head slowly.

"Why would anyone murder the house elves?" Harry asked perplexed, "Why would anyone who wants me dead..." Actually, who wanted him out of Hogwarts, but he had to play the 'stupid' game, "kill house elves in the dozen?"

"Probably the culprit used Imperius on the elves in question," Flint pointed out, "And instead of risking a potential exposure they took out all traces."

"Anyway that Heir business is having a nasty effect on Quidditch." The older boy muttered, "There are whispers about cancelling all matches. It's really getting to the professors' nerves that they can't capture this assassin. They thought it was a prank at first, but now? Now they're jittering. Your housemates made all the right calls from the beginning: stick together and no going around alone."

"Which reminds me...Where the hell have you been last night?" Draco hissed, "Do you have any idea what it means to have an angry Hufflepuff nearby?"

"What? Who was angry?" Harry asked, feigning ignorance.

"Look, I don't know what you told Longbottom to become your new best friend forever," at those words Vincent snickered, "But he did appear to be extremely worried about you suffering some sort of demise..." Draco's voice slowly turned softer, "Everything's alright with my aunt, right?"

"Of course it is." He blurted out quickly, "Why do you ask?"

"My mother used to tell me that her sister's return from Azkaban...left her a bit jumpy." Draco muttered, "Something about her words and actions...you know, when they snap your wand...it's a really big hit to the mind. Lots of people are no longer the same afterwards."

Harry said nothing, instead simply giving back an awry smile and then shrugging.

"She's pretty much normal. A bit fussing..." And apt in using the Crucio, but apart from that...yeah, the normal loving adoptive mother...a true example of foster love.

Breakfast proceeded without much complaint after that, except for a momentarily disappearance of the Headmaster halfway through it, probably because they had finally found where Peeves had hidden Lillian's frozen body.

All that remained for him was to hope he'd get some sort of idea before the end of the year. He needed to get Heather out of the chamber and to safety...maybe the Forbidden forest?

Yet in order to do that, he'd need somewhere to leave her afterwards. Some sort of place that could work well and keep the animal safe from its natural predator: Roosters.

It was kind of stupid actually how the mere scream of a rooster could kill a thousand years old Basilisk, but who was he to actually inquire on that? Maybe he could ask Newton. He had yet to have a normal chat with his so called Grandfather, but then again he'd have to get back in the chamber to do so.

And in order to do so he'd have to avoid the radars of the professors and...

"So, you spent the night outside?" Draco suddenly asked.

"Yes." Harry replied.

"You know it's the end of October." The blond boy remarked.

"Yes." The boy deadpanned, not understanding where his friend wanted to drive the point.

"You do not look frozen stiff or cranky for someone who spent a night outside."

"I'm under a cheering charm Draco. Trust me: the moment it ends I will probably curse half the people in front of me." Harry retorted with a bright smile. "And then I'll probably skewer the other half."

"You know...sometimes you're all happy and good," Tracey stated, putting her foot in the conversation, "Other times you're sort of a murderous maniac. Can't you stick to a single line of thought?"

Harry blinked. He hadn't been that bad, had he? He clearly did not have a problem, like going around killing people or obliterating them. Sure, maybe he talked to ghosts and...portraits, but both existed and were magical. It was perfectly reasonable and normal.

"Ahem! May I have your attention please!?" Gilderoy Lockhart suddenly yelled from the professor's table, standing up with his wand up high.

The entire dining hall turned to the man, who suddenly brightly smiled and began to talk.

Harry finally looked at the Muggle Studies professor and blinked. The man appeared like a sort of human like Ken figurine for the Barbie collection. Really, bright white smile, hair cut short, flashy clothes.

"I have received permission just last night, and by now I deem we should start as soon as possible, to begin a dueling club for the school! Everyone from every year will be permitted access, and we will learn how to duel our ways towards safety!" The man beamed as he spoke, "Every house and year is welcomed, and for the first ten subscribers, you will receive the Gilderoy Platinum Collection of

songs written by yours truly! Be quick and grab this opportunity as it passes...it's Platinum!"

Harry merely grumbled.

"Can I kill him?" He whispered. "Please. I'd use a cutting curse or something that leaves him to bleed like a pig for hours." He added as an afterthought. Flint was smiling, but both Tracey and Daphne slowly moved their arms further away from him, while Draco raised an eyebrow.

"Harry. Are you sure you're alright?"

"Cheering charm Draco," Harry muttered, "It's ending."

"Cast it again please?" The Slytherin pleaded, "I'd like a normal conversation."

"Alright." Harry rolled his eyes, "I'll make an effort for normal."

"An effort for normal?" Flint chuckled while giving him a pat on the shoulder, "Why! If you weren't normal you'd be playing Quidditch, or at least trying to get on the team..."

"Man was not meant to fly." He retorted, "Because if he was, then someone would have certainly given him wings."

"Yeah alright." Flint grumbled, "So, who's going to subscribe to Gilderoy's club?"

"I suppose everyone's going to be at the first lesson," Harry sighed, "And then we'll see who keeps coming back."

"We could have tried something like that too." Draco commented, "I mean: you took down a troll of all things."

"Oh right, because 'Troll Hunting' would be such a wonderful club." He replied while rolling his eyes, "I think it would be better to forget about all of this and carry on." He sighed at his words, "I suppose we'll all be there for the dueling lesson, and then we'll see how it turns out from there onwards."

"Harry James Scamander!" The screeching yell that burst forth from the hallway made his neck hair rise to unparalleled heights.

It had been what, an hour? Yet...

Yet Bellatrix Scamander had apparently appeared outright from the hallway, having probably floo-ed in from the Headmaster's office.

"You are in big trouble!" The woman exclaimed walking straight ahead to where he was. Harry had barely gotten to his feet that Draco was standing too.

"Hello Aunt Bella." Draco tried to say sweetly, but got only a flick of the eyes of reply from the woman.

"You're coming with me." Bellatrix hissed, "We have to talk about not writing to me at all since the beginning of school! And I had to learn it from a friend at St. Mungo that Miss Potter was apparently petrified at Hogwarts! You'd better do damn well to explain the situation young man, before I decide to...to..." Bellatrix took a deep breath, recomposing herself before smiling.

"Hello there Draco." She began cheerfully, before turning around a bit flustered at the sight of the rest of the student's body eying her, none the less the few professors that still remained at the table.

"Bellatrix." Snape was the first to stand up and move closer to the woman. "How..."

"Scamander's benefits, Severus." The woman retorted, "I am granted entrance to Hogwarts because of my relation." She then sweetly smiled, "We should catch up some time around. Tell me, has Harry done anything wrong?" She batted her eyelashes too, to drive home the point.

"Bella, we should maybe speak in my office?" Severus hurriedly suggested, "And once breakfast is over your son could reach us, yes?"

"I'm already done." Harry swiftly said as he was already standing up from the table and walking right towards them. Maybe if he acted fast enough the woman wouldn't be too angry. She wouldn't be able to Crucio him at school now, could she?

"Course you are." Bellatrix last three words were pure ice...and Harry shivered. They didn't bode well at all. Really.

Igor Karkaroff

"So we have a deal." The old man remarked quietly. "Because I would be much displeased if I were to find out that...we do not actually see eye to eye."

Igor Karkaroff had been a Death Eater for Voldemort. He had taken the mark. He had killed and butchered and destroyed lives. He had sold the names of other Death Eaters in order to save himself, and he had been pardoned in exchange.

Yet compared to that man, he held little faith he'd get out of there alive if he didn't give him one hundred percent of himself.

"Yes sir, of course. Send the kid straight to you, no detours." Igor's quick answering was met with a hum of approval, as the old wizened man stood up to leave. "If I may ask sir...how?"

"How?" The old man retorted, holding upon a wand fifteen inches long, with a core of dragon heartstring. "Of course the answer is pretty much straightforward and simple, yet ineluctably complicated and out of the reach of a simpleton like yourself." Igor flinched but did not reply.

"Then...why?"

"That is...none of your concern." The battered man then chuckled grimly. "Foolish of them to imprison me in my own castle, and foolish again to believe I did not know. He who holds the three fortresses of darkness shall bring forth its spawns. Remember Igor: Durmstrang would do better to remain a school...I liked it better."

"You're...you're not seriously contemplating them...sir...please!" Igor's remark was cut off by the flick of a wand.

"I need not a Crucio to bring harm, Igor." The man hissed, walking closer, "And I need not remind you that my knowledge of the Dark Arts exceeds that of a puny, pathological, inferior being such as

yourself." The wizard added. "Bring me Harry, or be prepared to see Durmstrang destroyed."

And then the man disappeared with a sharp crack, and Igor began to breathe again. He trembled as he stood back up, before slowly walking over to his alcoholic cabinet to open it, and generously pour for himself a good amount of Vodka.

"May God have mercy on my immortal soul," Igor whispered as he drank avidly the alcohol. He had never been much of a faithful believer...but if that was the plan of that man...then maybe not even God himself might have sufficed.

Author's notes

Alright.

Quick recap!

First off, the Voice is clearly not Grindelwald or Voldemort.

Secondly, Harry's on/off way of acting and thinking is, I hope, a perfectly clear example of what patching up someone's psyche can do. Thirdly, I'm foreshadowing. Fourthly, I enjoy foreshadowing.

Fifthly, it appears pretty much clear that there is a prophecy related to Harry that is quite a bit different from the canon one, but fear not! We will get to the bottom of it.

Now, Peeves' actions might not make much sense now, but I did always wonder what the Bloody Baron held as sway over the poltergeist. It will be eventually answered of course, but not right now.

And of course, by the time Lillian gets out of the petrification...

Going to be a really interesting end of the year!

And no, Dobby isn't actually the culprit...or is him?

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 11

It had to be said: when it rains, it pours. Harry hadn't actually thought much about his relationship with Bellatrix, but what little he had come to realize was not looking pretty good at the present. Maybe he should have written something to the woman, but on the other hand, the woman was clearly utterly and completely mad in her own accord, and would have probably killed the owl had he written anything 'non-acceptable'. The other reason he hadn't written to her since the beginning of the school year was, of course, far more human: he hadn't had the time.

"Harry?" Bellatrix's voice was sweet, as always before she began to use the Crucio spell, "What happened darling?"

"Mom..." Harry said, wracking his brain to come up with a good enough reason for his filial forgetfulness that would at the very least result in something less than outright murder from the woman. "I didn't want to worry you."

Bellatrix remained quietly silent, probably musing over Harry's words and weighting her options. The boy hoped the woman wouldn't actually try and harm him with an Unforgivable within Hogwarts, but he knew better than to challenge the sanity of logical thinking within that mad witch. Quietly, he waited her judgment.

"Oh, my little boy," Bellatrix cooed, her gaze softening. "My poor little boy," she added thoughtfully, "Who wants to become a little man." The woman's hand travelled to his shoulders, and then he was pushed face first against her chest in an encompassing hug. The witch's hands began to gently caress his hair, as she hummed a little lullaby song.

Severus took that cue to cough lightly and remind the woman that indeed, he was present too. The extremely embarrassing display soon came to an end, with Harry halfway torn between embarrassment and outright fright. The boy knew that outwardly displays of affection always came before the punishment. He just hoped she wouldn't do it in front of his professor, but even then...he would spend a merry Christmas indeed.

"Bellatrix." Severus began, "Would it put your mind at ease if I were to train Harry personally?" The raven haired man asked carefully, his voice as much neutral as it could possibly become. Harry looked at his potions' master with a sort of perplexed expression: he was already receiving training from Filius, wasn't he? Why would he...

"Of course it would, Severus." The woman replied with a little giggle that made Harry shiver inside, "After all this time you should know I trust you implicitly to bring forward his will." The boy's eyes widened considerably at that little tidbit of information. His gaze turned in shock towards the professor, the man he had least had considered...helpful. Severus Snape was a magical Nazi. Severus Snape worked at Hogwarts. Severus Snape was a damn Nazi spy.

"Hush." Severus hissed, eying Harry carefully, "He shouldn't be privy of this. He doesn't have the defenses."

"Course he has them." Bellatrix rolled her eyes, "He's my little Harry: I trained him personally on that. He's a natural Occlumency." Earned through the pocket watch of Salazar, but Harry wasn't going to be explaining that any time soon.

"Really?" And then Severus turned to him and eyed him. He eyed him harshly and with a face morphing ever so slowly into a puzzled, and then a shocked one. "Mother of Merlin." He murmured. "You're right."

"Of course I am." Bellatrix chuckled, pushing her own arm to surround Harry's shoulder, "He's my little prodigy son! I'm so proud of him...when he doesn't make stupid mistakes." The last sentence came out a bit harsher than she probably intended, Harry desperately began to think. Her wand was out only for habit, not pointed at him for some reason. She wasn't going to hit him with the Crucio, not in Hogwarts, not with Severus in front of him.

"I think he could hold the Crucio for more than four hours. Should we try it over the Christmas holiday, Harry?" Bellatrix smiled candidly as she asked that question, but Harry's uneasiness was probably showing, if Severus decided to intervene in that moment.

"Bellatrix. The Dark Lord gave you precise instructions." The man curtly explained, "You are to train him, not torture him or bring him to the brink of madness."

"I know Severus." The woman sighed exasperatedly, "But he makes these stupid mistakes every now and then." At those words, the witch's wand was now poking against the side of Harry's cheek, slowly circling around the boy's cheekbone. "And mistakes need to be punished."

"Bella." Severus' eyes narrowed.

"Sev." Bellatrix sing-sung haughtily, "He's my son: He's mine. If I want to, I can break all his little bones and then patch him back up. He's mine, only mine. Understand? My son is mine!" The wand's tip was now dangerously close to carving a hole within Harry's cheek, but the boy said nothing except look with pleading eyes to the potion master. He'd take even the Magical Nazi Spy, if it meant getting away from Bellatrix.

"I understand." Severus replied slowly, "But you should let him breathe, yes? If you really love them, you should let them go." The man was trying to reason with the woman apparently. Harry was already starting to give points to the Magical Nazi Spy on his scale of 'person he didn't want to kill even though he should'. His mind was actually reeling in thoughts after thoughts in an attempt to calm himself down.

"Oh, you're right Severus." Bellatrix mumbled after a while, "If you love them let them go." She whispered to herself, before slowly letting her arm fall to her side and away from Harry's shoulder. Harry took a deep breath of relief as the wand stopped being poked against his cheek. It lasted only a moment.

"There's nothing against punishing those we love, though." Harry spun around fast, but it was too late.

"Crucio." The pain blossomed through his entire being as he screamed in pain while trashing on the ground. He hadn't even realized he had fallen down until that precise moment, and yet all he could do was scream and cry for the pain to stop.

"Silencio." The woman added after a moment of thought. "While I enjoy your screams, it wouldn't do to disturb mine and Severus' conversation, Harry...That's another mistake." Bellatrix' words merely reached him, as he convulsed and closed within himself in

hope for the pain to stop. It had to stop. Why wasn't it stopping? Why was he feeling as if a thousand of molten steel like needles had suddenly begun ripping through his every pore and brain cell, breaking and splintering all along their passage. It was pain, pure and simple and unaltered pain that wracked through his entire body. His fists were bleeding from his nail's effort to dig within his own skin, his throat felt soar from screams that he couldn't hear and that didn't leave his lips.

"I'll do it Bellatrix, now stop this!" Harry didn't know how much time had passed since the woman had begun using the curse on him. He knew that it was with Severus' words that it finished, and for that, his stray thoughts went to build an altar to the man, if he ever survived or woke up again. He felt something foul smelling reach his nostrils, as a vial of something was poured down his throat by the potion master.

"What are you giving him Severus?" Bellatrix voice was filled with worry, "You sure it's nothing he's allergic to?" The whore. The damn thrice damned whore who had the galls to be worried for him after this. He would have taken his wand out and killed her, if only he could muster enough strength to flex his fingers.

"Draught of the living dead." Severus replied curtly, "It should put him to sleep soon enough, and then..."

Pitch black darkness surrounded him. He felt a soft humming and buzzing noise coming from around him, as if he stood within the center of a beehive. The humming was a song, some sort of lullaby. Yet it wasn't melodic, no, it was haunting. It felt like hearing something straight out of the Cthulhu Mythos: something you hear but cannot understand.

"Master...Master...Have I been good?" A gentle, young and high pitched voice echoed through his mind.

"Of course you have my little snake." The reply was softly spoken, yet filled with a good enough amount of warmth that to Harry, it felt as if he was intruding upon a private moment. If only he could see what was going on...

"Will Master tell me a story tonight?" It felt like he was hearing a daughter ask his father for a bedtime story, no...it was just that. If

only he could understand why everything was so pitch black and dark. Then the darkness receded lightly, and Harry realized the eyes had merely been closed. His eyes had merely been closed.

"I don't know. But I will sing you a lullaby." The sight in front of him was of the Chamber of Secrets, as it was meant to be and as he used it. He was within the comfortable bed of Salazar Slytherin, and looking at his basilisk, which wasn't much bigger than a giant Anaconda, he smiled gingerly.

"Master no! You are still wounded, you need..." The snake's hisses of protest were suddenly drowned by Salazar's parseltongue spoken lullaby that hummed kindly and gently, making the snake's head bob and slowly fall down.

"Sleep and dream tight." He whispered, before slowly moving to stand up with some effort. Grabbing a hold of his wand, he flicked it, sending the Basilisk to fly through the air towards the snake's nest, before heading quietly to his desk. He grabbed a quill, slowly dribbling it in ink before beginning to write down upon the parchment the notes that he needed.

The poison was slow acting, but eventually it would consume him completely. Before that happened, he had to find a cure, or a way out towards immortality. Iniura, his sword, was safely guarded. All that remained now...was to survive. His line was assured, if not by law certainly by his brazenly womanizer past. He stilled for a second, musing over the thought if history would remember him as one of the founder's four or as the wizard who couldn't stay away from a woman's bed. He had even polyjuiced himself into Lancelot once, to bed Arthur's wife. That had been a fun time. No, history would remember him with a different face, he knew. He had lost. He would never be known for what he had truly done...

He would be known as the betrayer of the Hogwarts four. He would be known as the wizard who valued blood purity above everything else, and he knew that Godric, the real betrayer...would be hailed as the brave and kind soul who had granted him the mercy to live...never mind the poisoned sword the man had wounded him with.

But he would have his revenge.

For he was Salazar Slytherin, the mightiest of the four founders!

Ron Weasley

Something wasn't right with Colin Creevey. He knew the first year Gryffindor was bad in some sort of way, but he hadn't yet found out how. Ron was suspecting him to be the mysterious assailant and murderer, because with his last victim he had finally gathered enough of a reason. First off, Colin was a first year, recently started. The assaulter too had started just recently, thus it was highly possible it had been one of the first years to do it.

Secondly, the boy had kept on buzzing around Lillian since he had set foot in Gryffindor tower, and his best friend had deemed it necessary to actually encourage him on by signing his photograph and be kind to him. That had probably developed the boy's stalker attitudes. He knew the first year had to be somewhat the culprit of the girl's recent petrification...if only he could find a proof.

Hermione was silently compiling her homework while taking a sip from a butterbeer. Ron rolled his eyes at the perfectly neat and compiled work of Hermione, before turning his head to his own patchy one. He should have actually tried to do it, but every excuse was good enough for him to avoid having to complete Binns' essay. Only Ravenclaws actually had the guts to go through the lesson and stay awake long enough to know what the homework was about to begin with, and the professor rarely graded them, unless you brought them right in front of him.

"Hey, Hermione." Ron asked, "Do you think Colin might know what happened to Lillian?"

"Uh?" The bushy brown haired girl muttered, "Something happened to her?"

Ron blinked. It had been on the lips of everyone since that morning, but Hermione hadn't been at breakfast...studying from early morning, probably.

"You didn't hear? Peeves petrified her somewhat and then dolled her up! She was wearing a clown costume when they got her down from the third floor's balcony!" The red haired boy murmured, "And they just don't know why Peeves would do that. He always plays

pranks on the students, but none take this long to end! She's going to miss out on all of the year's coursework!"

Hermione's face twisted in shock, as she quickly closed her books. Ron looked at her worriedly, before deciding to follow her wherever the girl intended to go.

"Don't follow me Ron." Hermione muttered, "I'm going to the loo, and then I'll have to make copies for Lillian: she can't miss a year!"

The boy reddened and sat down once more, shaking his head as he saw the retreating figure of the brown haired girl. The next moment, two pair of hands clapped him on the back.

"Our little Ickle Ronniekins!" Fred exclaimed. "How's life treating you with the beauties?"

"Gred and I, or Forge and I..." George began, "Wanted to know if you knew anything more about this morning. Strange things are happening at Hogwarts...strange things indeed."

"Fred, George! Stop it!" Ron whined as he got up once more, patting away his older brothers' hands from his shoulders. "I don't know alright? I thought it was that bloody git of a Malfoy, but the Ravenclaw cleared him...now I'm thinking Colin's the culprit."

"Colin?" Fred asked raising an eyebrow, disbelief evident in his voice. "That Colin Creevey? The one who's afraid of his own flashing camera, terrible murderer of House Elves?"

"Attempted murderer of the King of snakes and ravens?" George rebuffed, rolling his eyes. "Try again."

"Well, who's there this year that wasn't there last year?" Ron muttered darkly back, "It has to be one of the first years for sure!"

"How about our little Ginevra?" Fred pointed out, "You ain't accusing Ginny now, are you?"

"She did end up in Slytherin though." Ron whispered, turning strangely thoughtful, "And she did start to act strangely towards the end of the summer, didn't she?"

"She was just excited about starting Hogwarts with Lillian. You know she looks up to her as a heroine." George sighed, "Our little sister isn't that devious, Ron. Isn't that right Gred?"

"I am Forge."

"Yeah, anyway you two...we should look into it. Maybe she really is the culprit!" Ron excited remark was cut off quickly by Fred and George's eyes narrowing dangerously. Around them, a few Gryffindors simply walked around, no worries etched on their face.

"Ron." George began dangerously. "You're a man and you can take it: but if something happens to Ginny because of your rambles..."

"...then you better hope you have a ticket for Siberia." Fred finished the sentence darkly.

Ron merely gulped. Maybe he was seeing shadows instead of dragons...but what if his brothers were into it too? He had to investigate.

He'd show them all! He was Ron Weasley, and he'd get the culprit sacked and out of Hogwarts, and Gryffindor would then finally see him as one who has earned back the house's trust from the other houses. Yes, he'd do that. Then he'd become prefect and head boy, and Quidditch champion...

Speaking of Quidditch, with Lillian out of the team...maybe he could try for Seeker this year around?

Ginny Weasley

She sighed, her head beneath her pillow. She was a Weasley. All Gryffindors since the beginning of times, and yet here she was. A Weasley in Slytherin was a shame. One that her mother had yet to be given the news of, but she knew it was just a matter of time. Percy had kindly told her he wouldn't tell their mother, and both Fred and George had done the same. Ron had silently nodded too, but she knew that it was only a matter of time. She couldn't hide her school uniform colors once she got back at home now, could she?

She knew she shouldn't have led her mother on, but she hadn't been lying. Her mother had just believed that all of her children

would end up in Gryffindor, and no-one had told her the opposite. For all that Molly Weasley knew, her daughter was in Gryffindor having a nice life and friendship with the Girl-Who-Lived.

Instead here she was, hiding away her tears from the sheer stressful thing that was living in the Slytherin dorms. She had tried to talk with the hat, but to no avail. It hadn't even been on her head for more than a few minutes, that she had been immediately zoned into Slytherin. The house of the wicked and of the dark lords to be...there had even been silence afterwards, and she knew she had just betrayed everyone's expectations.

Even Lillian had given her just a tight smile afterwards, and nobody from Gryffindor even spoke to her except her family. Trying to make bridges with the house of the brave, furthermore, made her the subject of vicious remarks from the house of snakes. It had been little at first. Offhanded comments or small nibbles at the state of her robes, second or even third-handed things, and then it had finally reached the point of being openly flaunted as the 'pauper' of the house.

She was a Weasley, thus she was a blood traitor and a poor, worthless girl headed towards prostitution. That had been the last straw said by Pansy just few minutes before, as if the pug-faced girl knew the future like a seer, standing there surrounded by her friends while she was alone. So there she was, crying herself to sleep with her head hidden, when she slowly but surely walked let her hand go to the other thing beneath her pillow.

The magical diary that had comforted her during the last month of summer, which had helped her through thick and thin...it would comfort her again. Tom would speak to her and tell her how everything would be fine, how her dreams were feasible and everything else was within reach. Her hand moved a bit to the right.

There was nothing.

She moved her head up quickly as she scrambled nervously her hands beneath the pillow before removing it with haste in search of...it wasn't there. The Diary wasn't there. Tom wasn't there. Someone had taken Tom. She needed Tom to tell her she was good and brave, that she was going to be great in Slytherin. She needed

the Diary. Someone had taken it, him. Someone had dared steal from her. She had to find it. She had to find Tom.

She scrambled to her feet and walked out of the door, hurriedly running towards the common room. If it wasn't under his pillow, and someone had stolen it...where could it be? She had to find out. She had to find him.

The door of the common room opened, and as the girl walked outside with a hasty step, her eyes caught the reverberating glint of something green turning a corner. She didn't stop. She had to find out where Tom had gone! Maybe Filch would know. She'd ask.

She had to find it.

Harry

"I'll leave him to you then." The sweet voice that belonged to Bellatrix came through Harry's ears, as the boy breathed in raggedly the stale air of the dungeon where he most certainly still was. His back was against something soft, which ruled out him being on the floor, but it also was firmer than his bed, meaning it could be a sofa or an armchair of sorts.

"I'll start his training soon then." The potion professor replied curtly, his tone terribly neutral as the last pleasantries were exchanged between the two. A sharp crack soon echoed in the dungeon, and then silence ensued, if for a brief moment. Harry heard soft steps walking towards him, before a cold hand dropped on his forehead.

"That damn whore." Severus muttered, barely hearable but quickly caught by Harry's ears. "Crucio on someone his age and that long," he slowly added. "We have a problem." He added carefully, leaving Harry's side to move somewhere a bit further away.

"What problem, pray tell?" A voice, a sweet female voice, answered back. "Is...Oh tell me he's fine."

"He is." Severus remarked, "Send the message, would you? Bellatrix can enter Hogwarts at a whim. Something against that?"

"No idea, Severus." Now the voice was no longer that of a female, but of a man. It even felt familiar, sort of.

"We do need to come up with something. Hopefully, I will be able to keep my cover in Hogwarts long enough, but..."

"Severus." The voice cut straight, "Do not worry. Igor owes me a favor. Durmstrang is a bit cold, but Harry will have no troubles living a normal life there, away from Albus."

"If you're certain..." The potion master sighed, wearily mumbling something Harry couldn't catch, "See you later."

"Later."

Harry tensed just slightly as he heard Severus' step coming back, before slowly moving somewhere behind his head and finally sitting down on a wooden chair, judging by the noise it made. After a few moments, the sound of scribbling was heard. The man was probably writing something on a parchment, maybe grading some essays of sorts.

He kept silent, maybe he'd just wait for the man to wake him up, and then be on his way ignoring everything else he had heard but...but the man in question had wanted him out of Hogwarts and into Durmstrang, for his safety. He knew of Durmstrang of course: dark school, teaching Dark Arts, home of Grindelwald's ascension to power, and yet...the reason for it didn't seem anything more than letting him live a normal life.

So Severus wasn't working with the Dark Lord...and he wasn't working with Dumbledore. Severus was...he was a triple spy. James Bond would have been probably forced to admit that he had met his equal in spying. The question however remained: if he wasn't working for Dumbledore or Voldemort...who was to say he wasn't working for someone even worst?

"Master! I am coming!" The frantic hissing sound of Heather echoed throughout the walls, "I will find you master!" Harry gulped nervously. Just how could the Basilisk know where he was? Was it some sort of familiar link, the type the Wizards used? Or was it just a sixth sense?

"Go back to the chambers." He slowly hissed with his face pressed against the sofa's side. He didn't think the snake could hear him, and unluckily, he was right.

"Master where are you!? Master!" It was kind of cute having someone fussing over you and frantically trying to look for you. It reminded him of the times he had played hide and seek with his mother in the garden, but...but having a Basilisk, as big as a house, look for him? That defied creepy alright. He was probably going to finish like Hagrid, who'd call 'cute' a Cerberus and a Dragon without batting an eyelash.

Harry groaned mentally as he faked a yawn and slowly moved to a sitting position. The sofa was a dark green color and made with a wooden frame of some sort of light brown wood. He wasn't in his professor's office, but in his personal chambers. The man in question was writing at a nearby desk, but the yawning and creaking of the sofa alerted him, and so Harry found himself staring at the potion's master tightly controlled face.

With his vision returning, Harry looked around for a moment, seeing a normal bed, the desk on which his professor was grading essays, an armchair near the fire pit, upon which a painting of a blond haired woman stood, a cabinet and a bed desk, with a mirror standing on the side of the room near the door.

There wasn't anything particularly spy-like in the room, but wasn't that what made it a perfect spy room to begin with?

"Mr. Scamander." Severus curtly began, standing up. "We will begin lessons during Friday afternoon. Professor Flitwick unluckily is no longer able to help you." The raven haired man then proceeded to flick his wand and lit its tip, before moving it slowly in front of Harry's eyes to check for something. Maybe reactions, like the oculists usually did.

"How long has Bellatrix done so?" Severus asked hesitantly, after a few minutes. "You can rest assured: I will not tell her."

Of course he wouldn't. He belonged to the third faction. Just what did he have of so bloody important that people wanted to have from him or his body? Did he possess some sort of strange secret within

his soul that could unleash an Armageddon? Was he some sort of shackled ancient Cthulhu monstrosity given form?

He just dreamed of Salazar mostly; it was nothing more than silly dreams probably but...but something didn't seem right. People dreamed of conquering the world, not of dying because of poison and of hatred for Godfric.

"Since...the beginning." Harry choked out, looking sideways. "Most of the time it's nothing, really." He added quickly, "Just a few seconds, only enough to make me realize I'm wrong." His hands clenched against his own knees, as he could hear the noisy hisses of the Basilisk looming closer.

"A few seconds?" Severus murmured, "How many times do you make a mistake, Harry?" The man's eyes narrowed fiercely as he probably tried to read within his mind, but whatever he did read didn't make the man's face any more pleasant.

"I...Not many times. If I follow the routine and I don't slip, everything is fine, really." He meekly whispered, trying to stand up but being stopped by Severus' hand on his shoulder.

"Don't move." The man hissed, "You've been under the Crucio for at least fifteen minutes. It's a wonder you're even awake today...and it will be a miracle if you won't have spasms in the following days or something worse." Harry didn't know what to reply to that, and so he merely smiled weakly.

"Tell me if it hurts." Severus ordered, before grabbing his arm and moving his wand's tip alongside it. It felt tingly, as if electricity was running through it in a low voltage. He hadn't realized it till then, but his hand had been trembling and flexing by itself. Was this what the man meant with 'spasms'?

"Master, I'm nearly there! Wait for me! Don't die!" He had nearly forgotten about Heather! She was probably dashing through the dungeons' pipes looking for him. If the rumbling he heard was of any indication, she was getting quite closer.

"Wait for me in the chamber!" Harry hissed out loud as the wand of his professor suddenly reached his elbow, where he felt pain flaring through the rest of the arm. He just hoped Heather would listen, and

that Severus was not able to understand his snake-speech. He dreaded what would happen otherwise. The man merely raised an eyebrow at him, but removed the wand.

"The nerves on the elbows are the first to go usually..." He muttered, "You would do better to avoid 'punishment' for a long while. Crucio effects tend to accumulate and linger for years." With those words, Harry began to shiver on his own. He...he was going back home for Christmas probably, unless he did manage to convince his mother otherwise.

Strangely, the thought that he might not survive Christmas holiday had never reached him.

"Can you stand?" Severus asked, waiting for him to actually try and stay up with his own feet. Harry slowly edged closer to the border of the sofa, before slowly bringing the weight down on his legs as he wobbled on his feet. He took a step, and then his leg twitched and he fell down on the ground.

"I suppose it is to be expected." The man's reply was curt and emotionless, "I can give you a pain numbing potion. Should soothe the nerves and keep you at least from twitching and biting your tongue out. However if it persists..." Here the potion master shook his head, "Let us hope it does not."

"Yeah...Let's." Harry muttered darkly, before being helped back up. "Need to get...to my dorm."

"Indeed you should." Snape stated, "If they ask, you have spent the lunch hour eating with me and your mother. The topic was your schoolwork." The man muttered, "And if anything happens, do not hesitate to contact me." Harry merely nodded, before starting to walk out of the room. He knew better than to ask why he was being left to leave alone instead of accompanied back, but if he had to say, it was probably because Severus had a reputation to maintain with all three sides.

Gulping down nervously, Harry began his slow trek towards Ravenclaw tower.

Tom Riddle

"You need to work harder." The hiss was barely discernible, but it was heard. The figure scrubbed its own fingers quickly, hoping the sticky substance would disappear fast. "Dumbledore must leave." It was sticky and gross, but the figure needed it to be just like that.

"With him gone...we can take care of the chamber." The figure stilled for a moment, before whispering.

"What about..."

"He is faithful. He will be spared." The figure nodded to itself, before scrubbing harder. Why wasn't it disappearing like it should!?

"Someone approaches. Kill him. Deliver the message with a body!" The figure spun around, as the small figure of Colin Creevey came through the corridor, a needed step to reach the Gryffindor tower. He smiled at the figure for a moment, but then read what stood behind and paled. The wand was out in a moment, the boy never stood a chance.

"Avada Kedavra!"

The boy slumped on the ground, his life snuffed out in an instant. The figure walked quickly towards him, and then without batting an eyelid dragged its corpse to the front of the written in blood words. Grabbing the knife nicked from the kitchens, the figure raised it into the air before plunging it down on the body of the boy.

The murder had to be brutal and unrecognizable, after all.

IT would be the first...but not the last.

On the wall, written atop the dismembered body stood the words colored crimson red from the blood used to mark the reason for this macabre ritual.

The true Heir of Slytherin kills those who oppose the house!
Servants or death is all that awaits his foes!

Then the figure turned and ran.

Author's notes

First off, trying a new formatting style (Of whom I have no idea how well will result in once it is dropped over to 'the other side')

That said, we have a murder, a (minor) character death and things start turning grim...

But it's the thirty-one of October! So it's obvious things had to go to hell on that particular day. (It's a canon thing, really) That said... Harry will eventually catch a break. Maybe.

Glad to have new readers and reviewers alike and...well, I hope you enjoy this chapter!

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 12

The Ravenclaw bed wasn't as comfortable as that of the Chamber of Secrets, but it was good enough for him to nap and soothe away his nerves. Nobody was around the dorms in the middle of the afternoon, and with that he could actually try and get some rest in. He had barely gotten the hang of sleep, that he heard a rustling of feet walking in and then slowly moving to sit next to him. He tensed just so slightly, before a low murmuring voice got into his ear.

"Nargles fly away." The girl's voice was meek as it spoke, "Nargles fly and don't come back." She added softly, "Don't come back, ever again." She chanted slowly, some sort of lullaby probably as Harry could feel a hand touching the top of his forehead. "Sleep well." Then he felt the body move to slid on the bed itself, curling against his own and resting its head against his chest. He would have snapped his eyes open, but he was too tired to actually care, probably an after effect of the draught of the living dead.

This time around, Harry slept easily, no dreams plaguing him or sharp bouts of pain waking him up. No strange hissing sound from a worrywart basilisk reached his ears and thus, for once, Harry slept. He yawned at the end of his nap, waking up to find himself in the middle of the Sunday morning, still robed. If he had shared the bed with someone who wasn't a hallucination, or the product of his imagination, he could not say: there was no-one in the bed with him.

He slowly got up from his spot and began to take small steps towards the bathroom, when his right feet twitched and brought him down on the floor with a nasty thud. The boy groaned as he slowly stood back up, before starting to put his hands against the wall of the dormitory. Maybe he should have remained in bed, but he was positively famished from having skipped also dinner, and he wasn't going to keep on skipping meals because of some light spasms.

"Come on here." A soothing voice spoke from behind him, as he descended the stairs. The red haired Basileus stood there, right arm forward with open palm, as a gesture of help probably. "You look like you could use some help."

Harry merely nodded back to the teen that walked next to him before letting his arm move around the older boy's shoulders, and then letting Basileus help bring him downwards with a look that was half thoughtful and half serious. It didn't take much for Harry to be seated by the sofa of the common room, and when he was there he realized with a bit of worry that the common room seemed...eerily silent.

"Someone gutted a Gryffindor last night." Basileus said as he took a seat next to him, on the nearby armchair. "Bloody business. Happened on the same day Peeves petrified the Girl-Who-Lived." The wizard sighed deeply, before letting out a light moan of relief as he stretched his back against the armchair. "I'm too old for this."

"Already aiming at retirement, Basil?" The voice of the female Prefect, Penelope, echoed through the common room as the door swung open to let her in. "You know, some might say you've got the soul of an old man."

"My darling sip," Basileus chuckled, "Maybe I am an old man polyjuiced to look so dashingly young." The teen remarked with a saucy wink. "But enough of that: you got a name?" Penelope's face turned grimmer, as the girl nodded curtly. "Then pray tell." The teen added, in wait for the girl's reply.

"It was a bloody thing Basil," Penelope started, "They found him on the second floor near the stairs, where there aren't any portraits nearby. There was a message written on the wall with blood. The attack happened at night and..." The girl's skin turned slightly greenish, "And they gutted him like a fish. The poor girl who found him, Lavender Brown, she's in the infirmary from shock."

"They're probably going to close up the school if this keeps up." Basileus remarked grimly, "Just like last time. They'll send someone from the minister to investigate, Dumbledore will have to go to a hearing and all of that tripe will happen again." The red haired teen sighed. "And they'll look for a scapegoat to appease the masses."

"What are you talking about Basil?" Penelope asked, as Harry too looked with curiosity at the boy. What did he mean by that? Was there something about the last time it had been opened? It had been a long time ago. Decades, the Basilisk had said. Decades since it had been forced by the previous heir of Salazar to march and

harass the school. Even then, it had mostly petrified, and only by happenchance had it actually killed. Mostly bad luck on both parties, rather than an attempt at murder...the Basilisk hadn't known of that of course, but why else would the previous heir merely go around petrifying people and not killing them?

The answer was now clear: the previous heir hadn't wanted the school to close. This murderer instead wanted it to. Furthermore Bellatrix had barely left the day before, if she heard or if she returned. Harry had to write to her, to warn her. He had to simply speak to her or risk a punishment.

He had to...the fire pit was crackling in front of him, as he began to muse it over. The principle of walking into the fire to reach another place was called 'floo-ing'. Floo-Calling was the basic 'place the head' and talk through it. He could use that in a pinch, but Machiavelli in the end needed to have his wings stretched. He could send him...with the order to deliver the letter and get the hell out of there fast.

"Last time they accused Rubeus Hagrid, the now resident Gatekeeper, of being the principal culprit. He had brought into the castle an Acromantula, and they faulted the beast for the death of the student, albeit the other petrifications were pushed under the carpet and forgotten." Basileus began thoughtful, "It might just be nothing more, but in any case it is said that the beast still lingers in the forgotten forest." He mused out.

"There's a fifty years old Acromantula out there?" Penelope shivered, "Now I understand why they call it the Forbidden forest." The girl turned around, mulling it over, before turning to face Basileus once more. "You'll keep an eye out on our little king of ravens?" She asked with a small twinge of worry in her voice.

Harry's face turned puzzled as he didn't understand what the witch was saying, and at his look, the frown on Penelope's face turned to Basileus who nodded quickly.

"I was waiting for the right time to breach the argument." Basileus muttered, rolling his eyes as he gestured for Penelope to leave. "I'll talk to him now then." The girl huffed at being dismissed curtly in such a way, but turned around and walked out, probably to go and escort the first years that weren't in the common room.

"There is a rumor going around." Basileus began slowly, locking eyes with Harry, "You know that Colin was killed by the so called Heir of Slytherin..." The boy sighed as his hands went to his own temples to slowly massage them. "The problem is that the heir declared war to you. Slytherin is breaking up between those who believe you and those who don't. Gryffindor lost one of their students, and somehow they're starting to believe you were responsible for it. To top it off, some of the Ravenclaw first years are debasing themselves with random acts of bullying to ease their tension, and the Hufflepuff are basically entrenched and with their head beneath the sand. They refuse to help us and their prefects have removed support...we can't catch the culprit if we don't bring forward a united front..." Basileus sighed. "We need unity, because through unity, we can have strength."

"One student body, one school, one leader." Harry mumbled, remembering how he had said the very same things the year before, under the effects of the Bloody Baron's possession. "So why don't you go and do it?" He asked in the end, only to receive a small smile from Basileus in reply.

"Because next year I'll be gone studying for the Newts, Harry. You are young and have all life in front of you. The best trait of a real king, of a real leader, is not how powerful he is...but how well he knows when he need to abdicate in favor of someone else. All must end eventually, and you have all that is needed to succeed." Basileus smiled lightly, before winking with his right eye. "Reason it as if you were playing a game: what should you do to capture the enemy?"

"Look for him?" He asked only to receive a stern glare from the red haired boy. "I mean...have people search for him?"

"There are two ways to battle." Basileus began slowly, "As a Warlord and as a King. The first fights into the fray, the second battles from the stands. Wizards are naturally the second type. Pawns move upon the table guided by the hands of the king, and usually the Warlord's loyalty is what assures the pawns to move...you cannot have one without the other." The teen took a light breath, before muttering, "Battles are won through information. So let's start from the beginning and make our way up, shall we?"

"Why?" Harry was puzzled. "I mean, why are you telling me all of this? Why not choose someone else? I...I just want to have a peaceful life at school!" Basileus blinked once at the boy's words, and then he laughed. The laughter was heartily enough to pass for that of a wizened fat man, the kind of laughter that echoed throughout a room without stop.

"Do you know what changes fate, Harry?" The boy asked, the smile plastered on his lips, "Do you know what decides who is to be born King and who is to be made one? Do you know what it is?"

"No, and I don't care." He replied hotly, "I...I don't want to be a King or a Warlord or things like that! I just want to be Harry! Why can't I just be myself!?"

"Because someone took away your choice of course." Basileus offhandedly remarked, as he looked at his own nails. "Nobody is made alone, Harry. It is usually the choice of others that make you. Sure, a man can change some things near him, but the ripples that become tsunamis are cast from stones that come from centuries before you. Can you truly halt a tsunami alone?" The boy grinned, "You can't. You have to accept it. You are special Harry. By your simple existence, you have become something more than a mere pawn that walks on a chessboard called fate. The others may try all they might, but you...you have what it takes."

"So...my free will? Can't I choose?"

"Prophecies...can be interpreted." Basileus pointed out, "But they must not be fought." He added curtly, "To stop an avalanche requires far more force than merely steer it in another direction, Harry...stop fighting it, and accept it. Only then will you be able to change and bring forth change yourself."

"Who are you really?" Harry whispered, looking with fright at the teenager that...that didn't feel like one. The eyes were haunted and the smile bitter. The hands clasped together and the figure bent to have his face closer. The words' subtle undertone wasn't of a teenager who wished to rule the world. It belonged to a man who knew of what he preached.

"That is a question..." Basileus began, "That I will not answer now." He finished as he stood up. "Finding the culprit is not your objective,

Harry. Making sure you survive till the end of the year is, and that is why you must make sure the culprit is caught...whoever he or she may be. Use what you have and stride forward. I have faith in you." Then the man stood up, and quickly walked towards the male dormitories.

"The problem is I don't have faith in myself." Harry muttered as he looked at his hands, pale and trembling and twitching every now and then. "I don't want any of this." He whispered, closing his eyes. "I...I don't want to be a king...it's something you forced on me. I don't want to be loyal to the Dark Lord or to Dumbledore. I want to be me. I want to live my life...why are you doing this to me?"

"Wrackspurts make one's brain turn dizzy, you know." A half-quiet petite voice came to his ears, making Harry open his eyes to slowly stare at the source of the words. He raised an eyebrow in silence, as he watched the blond haired girl of the first night look back at him with a sort of smile on her face that seemed faker than the fakest monopoly bill. "It's bad I don't have the Spectroscopes to see them though, but I know what can make them go away, if you want to know."

Harry's face deformed lightly into a scowl as a twitch, before it resumed its normal appearance. One part of him wanted to yell at the first year to leave him alone, but another part remembered. It remembered those wide eyes and those thanks. It remembered those looks of loss and of curiosity and of light fright that he had removed with a simple talk. Maybe Basileus was right, maybe some people were simply chosen to be something else than average. Hadn't it been his decision, to be something more than average? Hadn't it been his call, to become something better?

"What is it?" He asked then, looking at the girl's face turning lightly more cheerful after having seemingly recoiled while he had been lost in thoughts. The girl moved closer then, before tapping his head with her hands and ruffling his hair.

"Wrack-Wrack-Wrack! You have to go away!" She intoned seriously, biting her lower lip before slowly taking a step backwards. "How is it? Mind less fuzzy?" As she asked that, Harry took in the girl's appearance. She was wearing a sweater that had been apparently knitted together by hand, but one side was bigger than the other. She wasn't wearing her robes, but after all it was a weekend, yet

she was also seemingly wearing a skirt. A skirt and only one of two socks, and...only one of two shoes?

That...was kind of strange actually.

"Yeah. It's less fuzzy." He replied slowly. Maybe if he acted in the same way as with Hagrid, everything would be fine. The girl literally beamed at him, before giving him a full-out hug. Harry's right eyebrow twitched lightly at the feeling of being hugged, and awkwardly patted the girl on the back.

"I knew the spell worked! Now I need to try it for the Nargles too!" She exclaimed happily, before skimping back towards the female side of the common room, and climbing the stairs two by two. Harry merely blinked, before standing up by himself.

Well...

If a King this school so desperately needed...then a King it would have.

At least until the end of the year, where whatever plan the potion professor had planned to would bring him to safety and to Durmstrang, where he could be a normal student like any other. A king for but a single year: he could live with that.

Neville Longbottom

Neville frowned. The corridor was empty. The rooms nearby were empty and the paintings were talking among themselves on what door was the right one. Yet he had received a note to be there on time, hadn't he? Maybe he was missing something, but he wasn't finding it funny at the moment.

"Longbottom?" A female asked him, making him turn around with a small eep of fright. He hadn't heard the girl walk all the way towards him! The girl was red haired, short and probably a first year. It took him a moment to realize it was Ginny Weasley, the only Weasley to have ever entered Slytherin.

"You were the one who wrote the note?" He asked carefully, "You know who's behind all of this?" He added in disbelief. Ginny nodded once, before gesturing for the second door in the hallway that led to

a particularly well furnished room with a giant mirror on one side and a comfortable looking fire pit on the other. "H-How!?"

The girl took a deep breath, before calmly murmuring.

"I...I saw it. Pansy was walking around looking starry eyed. Held a thing, a strange diary that...she left it on the table in the common room once, few minutes...I wanted to see what it was about and...the diary wrote back. It asked me, thinking I was Parkinson, when we would kill again." Ginny muttered. Her eyes were laced with heavy black sleep-bags, as if she hadn't slept at all in days. Yet she spoke again, "I'm scared she's out for me...couldn't sleep. I know you know Harry, and he's...he's strong right? He can protect me from the other Slytherins right?" There was fright and worry in her voice, so much that Neville actually felt slightly touched by the girl's words.

"Draco is Harry's friend too; he's also your housemate so why not ask..."

"He is a Slytherin!" Ginny hissed, "True to boot! He would have asked something from me! I am not going to be indebted to that bloody Death Eater if I can avoid it!"

"Why not talk to him directly?" Neville retorted.

"Because...Because if I go and people see me, I might not survive anyway. If he just...just says something about having taken a fancy to me, or things like that...it might discourage people, you know? I'm not asking about being the best friend forever, but just...an acquaintance he doesn't mind protecting? I heard from Ron how strong he is! With a murderer around he's the one that can protect me." Ginny whimpered as her eyes looked around frantically. "I'll give him the password to the Slytherin's common room even! Please...just...ask him if he would protect me?"

Neville was flabbergasted and at a loss of words. The girl appeared to have been traumatized to a level he hadn't seen even in the worst of St. Mungo's patients. The only case that went near it was of highly addicted people who pleaded the nurses for doses of magical drugs. Even then, those were the pretty severe cases that required a future use of Obliviate to at least get them back into society. Their

body remembered the urge, but their brain forgot the drugs and where to get them...that was actually the reason the spell was used.

"Please?" She sobbed again, clenching her hands together hard. "If...Is there an unbreakable vow to swear? I'll swear loyalty to him, he claims he's a king right? I'll...I'll be his most loyal serf, really...just please..."

"Why not Dumbledore? Why not ask Snape?" Neville blurted out in pure shock, he had half a thought of reaching for his wand, at least for his personal safety.

"They didn't believe me. Parkinson hid the diary, now the fault is mine for having tattled. I'm even worst off now in the Slytherin dungeon than before...please. I can't go back now without Harry's protection." She whispered.

Neville took a deep breath, and then he nodded with a tight scowl. He was accepting in place of Harry, and for that he just hoped he hadn't been lead on, but as the girl hugged him out as she began to cry and wail in relief, Neville didn't think he had done something that bad. The girl beamed at him, before quickly whispering.

"I'll...I'll be in the library then? You can ask Harry to meet with me there and just...talk a bit? Drive home the point?" Neville nodded once more, completely befuddled by the girl's actions. Ginny merely smiled at him once more, before turning around and dashing away.

"Just what did I get myself into?" He muttered with a groan. Shaking his head, the Hufflepuff turned around to leave and began walking alongside the hallway, towards the stairs. He'd have to knock at the Ravenclaw common room, and hope Harry would at least understand. As he ascended the staircase, he passed by a bushy brown haired girl, Hermione he recalled. The girl didn't so much as say hello to him, her face hidden within a pretty dusty small book.

A little bit contrite at having been ignored, Neville shrugged it off as he carefully made his way upwards, until the door of the Ravenclaw common room met him. The knocker didn't as much as budge, instead merely asking.

"Outside of a room there are three light switches, within a room there are three bulbs, you may only enter the room once. How do you find out which switch works with which bulb?"

Neville...blinked. What the hell were a light switch and a bulb!? He groaned slightly, before outright knocking on the wooden door. He'd have to ask the answer to that to Harry afterwards. He kept on knocking hard for a couple of minutes, but when no reply came he growled in frustration. There had to be another way in, right?

He tapped his hand against his forehead. Of course there was!

The boy hurriedly made his way to the seventh floor: he'd require the room of requirements to open a passage for him! That would work.

As he walked three times in front of the seemingly normal wall, the wooden door appeared among the cracks of the stone bricks. His hand shot forward to the door's handle, but it did not budge. For once, Neville raised an eyebrow in surprise. Usually the door would always open, why was this different?

He tried it again, but again the door did not budge. Finally, just as he was about to give up and walk away, the door creaked slightly as it opened. Carefully, Neville whipped out his wand and entered the room half suspecting something strange was going. He didn't go further than a few steps, when black raven eyes settled on his, soon followed by his own wand being removed by a bright red jet of magic and the door closing behind him.

"Well...What do we have here?" The voice intoned curtly, "Interesting...It is a pity that Mr. Scamander has a friend like you who does not know Occlumency. He should have chosen more wisely." The wand flicked once more, and Neville...

Neville blinked. He was walking around the hallway directly near the dining hall. He had to reach the library and tell Ginny that Harry wasn't going to come, even though somewhere in his head he didn't recall having even told him about Ginny.

He entered the library quietly, seeing the Slytherin first year seated in a corner, a bit away from the librarian. Carefully making his way around a few older Slytherin years and a couple of Gryffindors, he

reached for the girl who was apparently nervous and looking around frantically. Once she spotted him, the look of pure dread on her face just...increased.

"Oh no. No." She wailed slowly as Neville moved closer and raised an eyebrow. Why was she acting like that? Three wands were suddenly pointed at his back and he stiffened.

"Follow us nice and easy." The gruff voice mulled, as he heard another one mutter a 'Silencio' over him. "We've got to go have a nice little chat, you see?"

Neville's last meaningful gaze of scorn went to the trembling and whimpering Slytherin Weasley, who had her hands in front of her face. She had lied to him.

This was a trap, and he had fallen for it.

Harry

"The Basilisk is actually a rather easy creature to breed," Newton began to explain, "That is probably the reason it has such a blatant weakness." The Ghost was hovering near Harry, who had moved to his 'Headquarters' within the chamber of secrets for the Sunday afternoon that was the 1st of November.

"Could ear muffs counter it?" Harry asked slowly, as he stroked the head of Wat...Heather, he had decided to call the Basilisk Heather, "I mean...it sounds so stupid! A rooster just has to crow and bam! Dead basilisk. It's not...it's not..."

"It makes no sense, does it?" Newton remarked. "Well, offhandedly speaking, Basilisks are spawned from the infidelity of the chicken," the ghost actually chuckled at that piece of bizarre information, "If we relate it to real life, once a father discover the children isn't his, he can abandon him, can't he? Thus the basilisk dies once the rooster crows because the rooster acts as some sort of father who refuses the son. In this case, it refuses to let him live. It's really old magic Harry and mine are but suppositions mind you. It is a pity there are no ghosts of ancient Gallic still alive. They did use war basilisks...albeit they called them Cockatrice." The ghost mused once more.

"So there's really no way?" Harry asked, "I mean..."

"Now, did I say that?" Newton remarkably said with a light grin, "I only said what I know of; it is entirely possible a way exists that I know not of. While it is known that Basilisks die at the crowing of a rooster, it is also true that Cockatrice do not share said mythological weakness. Thus one is bound to suspect there is some way to make a Basilisk immune to it." Harry nodded grimly at that.

"So I'd have to look through books." Harry muttered, "And then work on getting the school back together, catch a murderer, survive until the end of the year, avoid Dumbledore and my family...well, at least I don't have to plan to learn Obliviate for Lillian. That is, if Professor's Snape's plan works of course and he isn't just using me."

"Master...scratch to the right a bit." The basilisk hissed slowly. Harry obliged and the giant snake outright began to purr in pleasure.

"Who's a cute little snake? You are isn't it?" Harry cooed cheerfully, as if he was just playing with the puppy of a dog. "You're a cute little snake. Yes you are!" He added carefully, "But you must stop going around school looking for me, alright?"

"But master..." The Basilisk began, "I feel when you are hurt. It is my duty to help you!"

"Hea...Watson. Heather Watson! I demand you stop recklessly endangering yourself!" Alright. That piece hadn't come out of his mouth had it? He hadn't just talked down to a thousand years old basilisk, had he? Especially not while considering the thing a baby of all things and talking to it like that. Well, not 'it'. Her.

"Yes, master." The Basilisk grumbled, "Old master said the same once. Angry I left Hogwarts to go in the forest. I ate spiders there because they were yummy, but old master was angry I risked hearing a rooster's death song." The snake hissed slowly, "I miss the old master sometimes." There was sadness in the snake's tone. "He used to sing me to sleep. One day...he just did not wake me up."

Harry said nothing, instead just scratching in silence the head of the basilisk with low circular motions. The snake herself stood quiet,

every now and then letting her tongue snap out of her mouth and then back in.

"Young Raven!" The voice of Helena echoed through the chambers, as the ghost appeared straight through the ceiling. "I have dire news."

"I say we should bring death to them!" Henry remarked hotly as he flew inside the chamber right behind the Grey Lady. "Those worthless maggots."

"What's going on?" Harry asked as he slid down from the snake's neck, where he had been forcefully 'sat' once Heather had decided she was due some scratches behind the ears.

"Students kidnapped your friend, that Neville Longbottom guy." Helena began, "The portraits would have warned the Headmaster, but since they are 'stalling', there's the risk that once one reaches him he'd be forced to deliver all that he knows on you." The ghost finished grimly, "As for us ghost, I have little doubt that Dumbledore is just looking for a good enough reason to trap one of us and interrogate us. We have to help the students, but if we can avoid the Headmaster, then it's for the best...and of course, being it a Sunday, the professors are sloshed over at Hogsmeade."

"All of them?" Harry asked with surprise.

"There are the Hogsmeade weekends after all: at this time? They're all down there except for the Headmaster." Henry pointed out, "And maybe that squib Argus and that oaf of a groundskeeper. But you don't bring squibs to battles fought with wands!"

Harry raised an eyebrow as Helena sighed through her ghostly form.

"He's still a Slytherin after all. Bigotry is in their blood."

"That's a stereotype!" The Baron hotly exclaimed, "In my times, these sort of things were normally known by everyone! You don't bring squibs to wand battles, because they drop like fleas!"

"As fascinating as it is to listen to history by two ancient monuments such as yourself," Newton butted in with the sheer grace of an elephant, "Where is one of my Puffs now?" The ghost was making a

serious imitation of the fabled 'Hufflepuff' rage. The motto 'it's always the quiet ones' came from that house after all. Nobody wanted to be on the receiving end of an angry Hufflepuff. So kind and cute and fluffy when appeased they turned into such horrible creatures when angry that it was like giving food to a Mogwai after midnight and have Gremlins running amok.

"They headed for the abandoned bathroom on the second floor. Myrtle's one." Helena remarked, and with that, Harry blinked before smiling.

"Oh...this is rich." He chuckled.

"Really, really rich." He added after a few seconds. Well...the school wanted a king. He'd give them a king alright.

Ron Weasley

Hagrid was probably the most normal person around that Ron could ask questions to during this particularly dark period. Colin was dead. He had suggested that the boy might have been the culprit, and then the boy had died. Somehow, some small part of him believed it was his fault. The rumors had spread out just as fast as those that made out his little sister as the other culprit.

They were completely senseless and worrisome, but like any rumor they spread like fire on dried leaves. Slowly, the giant's hut came into view and Ron quickened his pace. The sun was dying over the horizon, and yet in front of Hagrid's hut the door was open.

Ron felt a bit dirty at being covered with the invisible cloak of Lillian, but the girl wasn't going to use it petrified as she was, and he as a detective needed all the help he could get into cracking the case open. He just knew it had to be someone of that time, and finally his brain had clicked long enough for him to ask the librarian for the Daily Prophet's articles to that period. Hagrid had been the one accused and had his wand snapped for it, but since it had been an unwilling attack, he hadn't been condemned to Azkaban.

As he slowly moved closer he could see there were people standing outside, wearing the ministry's emblems.

"Now, Mr. Hagrid, you are to follow us to Azkaban until a time where we can peruse your innocence." A curt voice explained, belonging to a stern looking man. "You should keep your dog down too." The man added with a sneer, as the barking sounds of Fang echoed through the darkening area.

"But...But I...yer sure? Dumbledor' words? Yer really sur' I've gotta go there?"

"Last time around..."

"But it wasn't Aragog! He's a cutey! He's got nothin' to do with this! Just ya follow the spiders and ask him!" Hagrid yelled out loud, as the ministry officials got their wands out.

"You may follow quietly, or you may be forced to follow. The choice is yours, Mr. Hagrid." The tone was now steeled and cold, and Ron held his breath as the half-giant lowered his shoulders in defeat and meekly nodded to the ministry officials.

It was the first of November, and Ron Weasley turned his gaze towards the forbidden forest...He'd ask Hermione. As the ministry officials brought Hagrid away, Ron kicked with rage a stone nearby in frustration. He knew that if Lillian had been there she would have done something, anything. He was just a damn git who had to go around asking for other's help...He'd get Hermione though, before marching in the forbidden forest.

All things considered, he was still bloody damn scared of spiders.

Author's notes

Yet another chapter strolls by.

I have just recently discovered that some of the stories I wrote were briefly commented in other websites. Now, I am extremely flattered by the fact that someone would go as far as mention one of my stories elsewhere and comment on it. Even the negative views on them are in truth welcomed completely. The only problem I have is...why didn't anyone tell me? Mind you, if you have a look at my profile (updated just yesterday) you will see that by now, the reason I write is to ameliorate my style and my use of the tongue. So if somehow you come across any of my stories being reced

somewhere, or being spoken of...could you kindly point them out for me? Even if it's just only a load of insults stringed one after the other, I'd really like to know about it. Because at the very least I can try and get better. Mind you, I'm speaking grammatically and character-definition wise; plot is plot: I'm not going to change it because someone wished a character was still alive.

Anyway, the 1st of November passed by with some events happening beforehand precisely because of the murder, and then we will see how it will go forward from there...

Hope you enjoyed!

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 13

The wand felt good in his hand. It was warm, nice, perfectly befitting him. He would curse them to oblivion, he had decided. Well, maybe not completely to oblivion, but just enough to lay his point across. He didn't want to pass off as the bad guy, the evil one, the monster...but sometimes, people just needed to be reminded of their own inferiority. He was, after all, the descendant of Salazar and Rowena, two founders of the school. He had never been meant for average. He had been meant for glory.

The Bloody Baron left his body a few seconds later, and Harry took a deep calming breath. That was what his possession induced state made him think about, and that was what he would avoid doing. Him at the top, the rest as flies to be squatted or brought into obeisance. He hated it. He hated having even the lingering belief of superiority against someone else, because it made him dirty, no better than the magical Nazis themselves. Yet he knew he was fundamentally different. He at the very least was trying not to be evil.

There was a dull resounding clack as the secret passage of the second floor's bathroom opened, revealing the assembled kidnappers talking loudly among themselves while pointing their wands like they were nothing more than sticks towards Neville. Didn't they know how dangerous those things were? Would they handle guns the same way, by sticking them around? They were but pieces of wood, and yet they were far more dangerous than any type of gun Harry could think of. He had to be quick about it.

"I tell you: we have him spill his guts on the Scamander, and then when we find out where the hell he goes in his free time we ambush him there." One of the boys, a Gryffindor, pointed out.

"That lacks subtlety," a Slytherin remarked with a sneer, "We should..."

"Oh please, keep on speaking." Harry remarked drily, "No really. Keep it up." The students, five in number, turned around as if they had been whipped. "You see, it's kind of..." Harry moved his right hand in the air as if he was trying to catch the word, "Incredibly cliché for the bad guys to just talk in front of the hostage."

"Well, this makes things easier..." A Gryffindor foolishly exclaimed, only to be held back by one of the older Slytherin.

"Wait. How did you get in here?" The Slytherin was a fourth year, maybe a fifth at most, and Harry saw his eyes were black as they narrowed onto him. Neville was trying to speak, but they had placed a Silencio on him, probably.

"Now, there are two ways to solve this." Harry mused over, "I can kill all of you and have Hogwarts close while your bodies wither and rot within the bowels of the chamber of secrets," he began harshly, "Or you can leave on your own feet. You will not have a second chance." To drive home the point, he snapped his fingers. The sudden trembling and clunking of all of the faucets, soon followed by the cracking of the mirrors and the batting of the bathroom's stall doors made the five students look around in fright.

"You see...I am both the true Heir of Slytherin and the King of Hogwarts. So bow to me or leave." He hissed in the end, before the grumbling noise grew of cacophony, "You do not want me to call forth my beast, do you?" He smugly said with a tight ferocious smirk.

Howling was heard around them and the rasping of claws came from just beyond the wall and that...that was the final cue for the students to leave, in a hurry. Running like their very lives depended on it the students ran out of the bathroom yelling and screaming that the Heir of Slytherin was after their lives.

Harry waited for a moment, before curtly nodding and grabbing Neville by the arm.

"Open." He hissed to the bathroom's faucet with the snake etched upon it, and as the hole opened in the ground, before the Hufflepuff could say anything against it, they both jumped in. "Close!" Harry yelled behind him, just to make sure it would close.

"Keep your eyes closed Neville." Harry said quickly, "Heather has lapses on her death glares when she's nervous, and I'd be saddened to lose you." He muttered as he barely repressed a chuckle at the sight of Neville quickly obeying and shivering in fright.

"I'm leaving you right in front of the infirmary," Harry mused, walking and gesturing to Heather to let him move through as one of the many heads of Slytherin etched upon the sides of the wall opened to extend the usual stone ramp. "From there just say Peeves scared the hell out of them, alright?" Neville couldn't even hum his approval, and so all he did was nod. He did kind of hold tighter when he heard the hisses coming from Heather's throat. Since Harry didn't pick up any words from it, it meant that it was just the normal way for Heather to see without her eyes.

Snakes did that sometimes, didn't they?

Neville used his head to tap against his shoulder, thrice. Harry took a step into the hallway in front of the nursery, and then murmured back to the boy he was carrying with his arm slung over his shoulder.

"Oh, right...what I am going to do?" He asked, and as he received an affirmative nod from the Hufflepuff's head, Harry merely shrugged. "Don't know. I did scare them stiff, so I suppose they'll try and retaliate soon enough...I'll need to have a meeting with..." And then it clicked. "Oh right: gather a couple of Hufflepuffs who would like for house unity. Meet me in front of the architect's statue in the hallway tomorrow. Our year or younger though, don't trust anyone else...and be sure before asking." Harry dropped the boy on the stool of the infirmary, glad that Madam Pomfrey wasn't in the room at the moment.

At Neville's gesture of 'question', Harry chuckled before answering, "Trust me Neville." He patted the boy's shoulder before adding in a low murmured tone, "We will change Hogwarts before the year is over. Now move it, it's nearly past the curfew hour." And with those words said, Harry turned around quickly and left to re-enter the chamber of secrets.

Salazar's chamber of secrets, as the name implied, held many secrets. The faces of the man carved upon the walls, for example, were each a doorway that led somewhere within the school. One appeared right outside the Hufflepuff common room, while another straight in front of the infirmary. Yet one more was in front of the Slytherin's common room, just like one would lead near the Gryffindors and the Ravenclaws. The sixth door would lead near the headmaster's office, the seventh brought one near the hallway and

the eight, of course, was the one that brought one on the second floor in the abandoned room.

The 'bathroom' exit was the one for the basilisk, but unless Harry was mistaken, Salazar's notes mentioned thirteen exits, not nine. Thirteen was, after all, a powerful magical number.

The ninth 'Salazar' face, which was the tenth exit, the one carved straight ahead from the basilisk's exit into the school and from which the Basilisk tended to descend from led outside. The eleventh door was none other than hidden within the walls and led to the seventh floor, sharing the door with the room of requirements.

Harry had yet to discover what the two remaining exits were and where they led to, but at present he was well enough placed to know he could circle the castle safely, if he so wished. The snake that acted as a guardian for the Slytherin's dungeon looked at him in the eye for a long moment, before it swept itself aside with little problems.

Harry entered the common room amid the gasps of fear and fright of the wailing students, none the less the Slytherins he had scared back in the bathroom to begin with. As his eyes narrowed onwards his targets, he felt a strange wisp-like feeling emanate through his body.

He had been clutching his wand even then, and billowing grey smoke was being emitted by the tip, flowing through the Invisible cloak and basically surrounding him in a sort of grey-like ghostly appearance with shiny green eyes. He felt like one of Scooby-Doo's evil guys actually; especially with the shrieks coming from some first year girl of Slytherin who simply ran upstairs to her dormitories.

Harry's eyes looked around the common room of Slytherin, taking in the black leather sofa, the fire pit, the soft green glow that surrounded the dungeons, the well-furnished area...and the people who were there. More than a dungeon it looked like the inner chambers of a palace, and Harry could hardly fault it: if he had to stay underground, at the very least he would make sure for it to be a comfortable place.

"Miles! Merlin be damned he's the real deal!" The other Slytherin screamed as he took out his wand trembling, "Stay the hell away! Stay away or I swear..."

"Don't antagonize him Pucey for the love of Merlin!" Miles hissed back, putting both of his hands upwards in the universal gesture for surrender. "We didn't want to! I swear we didn't want to! We were asked to! We even got paid you see! We...please don't kill us!" The other boy was literally pleading him, and Harry stood still for a moment. They...they weren't planning on a revenge? Had they...really fallen for such a trick? Well it was with little doubt that they'd still think of him as the real heir of Slytherin.

His cover of having asked Peeves for help had yet to come through after all, fun fact about it was that it was the truth: he had indeed asked Peeves to scare them senseless. His eyes settled on Draco, who was apparently eying him nervously with Vincent and Gregory behind him. Among the paling students some looked at him with fright, but a few...a few he saw holding the same calculating gleam he had so much prided into, when he had first founded the scho...

NO!

"Listen to me and listen well!"

"FUCK OFF."

The ghost-like essence that had surrounded him disappeared as if a fan had struck it throughout with unquestionable strength, dispersing within the cracks of the floor with little trouble. Harry took a single, deep breath, before slowly putting his wand back in his holster.

"This is the only warning I will give." Harry mused out loud, "Tomorrow afternoon, I will start a group. A group that will hold no ties to blood purity, to status or nobility. I will start a group composed of all houses who seek to participate, and who will upon entrance swear a single thing: to be loyal one to another and to help in uniting the school under a single banner, a single house, a single force to be reckoned with. By tomorrow, those who will stand by my side will be the King's men, those who will stand in the sideline shall be left unscathed and those who will oppose me will be crushed. I will tolerate no attacks on any whom I consider my friends and for that, I hope the message has been delivered promptly: I can kill you where

you sleep, I can butcher you in your baths and...if you dare oppose me, I will."

Then Harry smiled, made a stiff gesture of a nod towards Draco, and turned to leave. "Those who wish to be King's men will meet tomorrow in front of the architect's statue. Keep in mind: there will be no betrayals, for those who betray will be slaughtered down to their very last relative! That much I swear upon the might of my ancestor, Salazar Slytherin!" And with that final warning that came out with a far more raucous voice, Harry left the common room of the Slytherins.

As he trudged through the open door towards the chamber of secrets, and from there back towards the Ravenclaw common room, he couldn't help but feel slightly tired from the effort. He felt...like he had a ton over his entire body. The combined weight of just what he had done crumbled against him forcing him on his knees within the common room that was deserted. Strangely the study group was fairly less active as of recent, but Harry barely made that thought as he wobbled back on his feet.

He felt the need to puke his own guts out and slap himself to death. He had basically delivered his starting speech as a Dark Lord to the masses of the Slytherin dungeon, when he had asked Neville to ask just a few and be careful about it. He had...for a single moment he had felt a wave of pure exhilaration at the thought of having them all mesmerized by his words, by his actions, by his decisions. He had talked and they had listened.

He had acted...He...He flung his head against the cold stone wall of the common room, not strong enough to bleed but strong enough to feel it and hear the light 'thunk' the noise made.

"Stupid!" He whimpered. "Stupid!" He exclaimed. "Idiot!" He added. "What the hell was that!? Promising murder!? What am I, Stalin with the Gulags!?" He crumpled like a broken twig on the floor, in front of the fire. "I'm an idiot." He whispered in the end, "A true idiot."

"Everything's alright?" A voice asked from the staircase. Harry's head snapped to the side, staring at the puzzled face of one of the first years, a boy with casket-short brown hair and dark eyes. Probably the closest to the stairs, if he had heard him. "Did the...Did the heir take anyone?"

Harry took a deep breath, and then shook his head. The fake heir hadn't taken anyone while the real one might have convinced people that he and the fake were the same though, considering his threats. If only there was a way to discern the real one from the false one... Then he blinked.

Oh.

That could work. No, scratch that. That would work.

He knew what he had to do now.

"What's your name?" He asked, curious as he stared at the boy in question.

"Huh? I'm Andrew." The young boy meekly replied.

"Good. I'm Harry Scamander, heir of Salazar Slytherin and Rowena Ravenclaw, adopted by Scamander and thus Heir of Helga Hufflepuff through it. In short: I'm the heir of badgers, ravens and snakes. I am known as King. I..." Harry stood back up slowly, a smile on his face, "Am the King of the Animals that built Hogwarts...Thank you for your help, Andrew. You know, your name comes from the Greek," Harry chuckled, "It means Man and Courage. I'll remember you." Then he walked straight towards his dorm room, and fell asleep like a rock. The next morning, he would have a lot to do.

Ron Weasley

The morning was met with a strange and eerie silence through the entire common hall. Hagrid was missing, and yet that wasn't what was on the rumor mill. No, the very worrisome fact was that silence was all that stood in the hall, as the morning of Monday began. The professors were surprisingly quiet too, albeit they probably had their reason with Hagrid's being taken in as the scapegoat. The flying professor was missing too, but the poor bloke was having a really horrible year.

His entire family tree was practically dropping like flies. The man, Sirius Black, belonging to an ancient and noble house of purebloods was losing cousins, great-cousins, grandfathers, uncles and aunts.

They always made the news, and the daily prophet was even running an article concerning the 'Black-Death plague' that was surrounding the family. Some even went as far as speaking of a curse being placed on them.

Yet the silence was unnerving, completely and utterly still. Finally, Ron could hold the question no longer and turned to his table-mate, Hermione.

"What's going on?" He asked in a low murmur. "They're all awfully silent."

"I don't know." Hermione replied simply, "Whatever it is, it has our upperclassmen in tatters. Look at Angus and Iain over there; they're both shaking like they saw a Dementor."

Ron scrunched his nose for a moment. He had no idea who Angus and Iain were at the table or what a Dementor was, but he did notice a few of the upperclassmen were positively pale and white. The low whispers weren't even hearable, and the sheer fright the two boys displayed was something similar to what he did when he saw a spider of all things.

"Looks like we're about to find out." He whispered slowly, as his eyes looked at the incoming figures of the few Ravenclaws who were the ones furthest away from the dining hall. The last one to enter strolled in slowly, his eyes gleaming over to their table, then the Slytherin and finally the Hufflepuff. Ron saw the boy nod towards the last two, and he repressed a shiver. The feeling he had when looking at...at Harry was of fear.

It frightened him. Those eyes, that pale skin, the way he walked. It was frankly a wonder nobody was screaming or running away.

"He's the real deal. We're dead. We don't believe shit of what Pucey says next time." One of the Gryffindors hissed loud enough to be picked up by Ron, who stiffened.

"The real Heir."

"Shit was he scary last night."

"Nobody's safe."

"He's got a bloody monster at his command."

"We're dead." The whispers that hurried through the room by the Slytherin table were met with an equally astonished flurry of whispers from the Hufflepuff.

"Unite the houses? Is he mad?"

"That's like, breaking centuries of tradition."

"Wouldn't be bad though."

"You kidding? Think befriending some Gryffindork without knowing!"

Suddenly, amidst the chaos, the sharp sound of metal hitting against metal echoed. Albus Dumbledore stood up from his spot at the center of the professor table, before coughing once in order to garner the attention of everyone in the room.

"It has come to my attention that Peeves has been harassing some students with bad taste jokes, and working together with Mr. Scamander, has effectively convinced a few older student of his so called true Heritage. Mr. Scamander, while I applaud the courage you demonstrated into moving to safeguard your friend from the plot of jealous Slytherins, I am however loathe to grant points concerning the method you used that just increased the fright in the school; something that does you no honor."

Ron listened to the conversation eagerly. So apparently whatever had happened concerned events of last night, and the Gryffindors' older years had had some work into it. Maybe they had helped Harry fight off the plot of the Slytherins? He knew they shouldn't be trusted by now after all. Maybe, and just because Harry was after all Lillian's brother, he could try and make an effort again with the boy...as long as he admitted he had been a bloody idiotic git to believe Malfoy to be someone worthy of befriending.

"Thus I will have to remove ten points from the houses of those who participated in last night events, and twenty more will be removed from Ravenclaw for the sheer lack of thought of what one's own words may affect. Mr. Scamander will furthermore make a formal apology to the parties he has in such a way offended, by also

publicly renouncing his claims of being the heir of Salazar Slytherin. A swearing under magic will suffice, my boy." Dumbledore said lastly, with a try of kindly grandfather tone.

Ron looked aghast at the boy. Did he really have the nerves to actually proclaim himself the heir of Salazar? In public? Well, Dumbledore seemed to believe he wasn't the heir, and to go as far as have him swear under his own magic that he wasn't one...that was a bit harsh, wasn't it?

"Dumbledore's going to get it." Hermione whispered with...a strange amused tone. "He bit off more than he could chew."

"Hermione? What are you..." But Ron's words died in their throat, as Harry coughed, stood up, and then slowly walked towards the front of the four houses' tables.

"Just listen. This will go down in history," was all that the brown haired witch said.

Draco Malfoy

Draco was holding his fork and knife as if they were anchors of safety. Next to him both Gregory and Vincent were positively holding their breath, as they looked at the boy their own age walk as if he possessed some sort of power that forced them to look at him. His father had told him once the stories of how the Dark Lord simply exuded charisma, and brought people under his fold with little effort. He offered them what they wanted, and made it so they would be forever loyal to him. The Dark Mark was just a symbol of that loyalty.

When he had been little, Draco had dreamed of receiving the Dark Mark just like his father, and become something his father would be proud of. Unfortunately, he realized with his mother's words, those dreams were foolish. A real Slytherin was first of all a person who survived, a person who held the right ambitions to power, and a person who knew when to cut his losses. The Dark Lord had lost, and thus instead of dreaming of the past, one should start looking towards the future.

He was now looking at Harry Dursley, the boy he had befriended through a strange twist of fate one morning, when he had been the one in search for fellow purebloods to turn into his goons, and that

instead he had hailed as King because of his wits after one morning in the library. There simply had been no other choice. His mother always used to tell him that arrogance killed the wizard. The best Slytherin of course were not humble, but they did not let pride blind them to power.

After the previous night, when Harry had strolled into the Slytherins' common room with ease, proclaiming himself the one true heir of Salazar and displaying an aura that had made him stare with open eyes, Draco had no doubts. Harry was indeed the real heir of Salazar, and if he now stood there, with the room given and publicly said that...

Draco looked at Harry taking a deep breath, clench his fists, and then, with his twin green eyes bore a hole outright into the Headmaster's own gaze.

Then, the boy began to talk.

"Hello." He began softly, "I'm sure many are actually thinking if the Headmaster is mad or merely an old coot by now." He added, "I am, after all, the true Heir of Slytherin, Peeves notwithstanding." He chuckled, "I could bore you with a long and complex dialogue, maybe a bit of high strung words in my defense, but I won't. I am the true Heir of Slytherin and the Basilisk, the beast that lives in the chamber of secrets, is at my command. Last night, I refused to use it against students of the school and instead asked for Peeves' help. I am not the murderer, but I am the true Heir of Slytherin. There. I said it. I'm the real Heir of Slytherin and no amount of ducking your head under the sand will convince me otherwise." His voice was softly spoken, and even though Draco had been expecting something far longer and with more verve, this was...kind of soothing.

"I am not a blood thirsty assassin though. So what if my ancestor is Salazar?" He shrugged, "I also have Rowena Ravenclaw among my ancestors, by the way, but does anyone realize that? Nah. Too busy with a stupid chamber that's good as a napping spot and nothing more..." Draco blinked. What was the boy aiming at? "Certainly if people are idiots and still believe I could possibly murder anyone, I can hardly fault them. They do go to school here, do they not?" The boy raised an eyebrow, "Shouldn't you teach people not to be stupid actually? Isn't all this panic, this fright, this fear...your fault,

Headmaster? You should have found out the culprit quite fast enough, isn't it? You defeat Voldemort," flinches and small gasps of terror were heard through the room. "And you can't catch a mere murderer with delusions of grandeur?"

"Mr. Scamander, by your very own admission, shouldn't Professor Potter be the heir of the chamber?" Albus queried after few seconds of silence, earning a shocked gurgled noise from the Defense Against the Dark Arts professor.

"Albus!"

"The Potter line descends from one of the cadet lines of the Peverell, who is a cadet line of the Slytherin." The Bloody Baron spoke grievously, hovering downwards from the ceiling of the dining hall. "Just like Harry here is instead of the principal line, for having been adopted by the descendant of mine and Helena Ravenclaw's spawn."

Draco gulped down in fright. The Baron appeared to be positively pissed, and if he was scary even when he was normally acting, it had been months since they had last seen him, and they hadn't been kind at all. At least, if time could not be kind for a ghost, Draco didn't know. What he knew was that right in that moment, he was contemplating between running the hell away from the scary ghost and screaming.

He did neither of course, but the temptation was there.

Harry

Harry blinked at the hovering ghost, who slowly but surely made its way downwards from the ceiling and...

"And because of that," he spoke loudly, "I am the true Heir of Slytherin! No amount of compulsions or charms will change the outcome, for only true disownment can avow that which magic has bind! You may now query yourself, Dumbledore! Ask yourself: since when did he manage to deflect my legitimacy? Since when did he know? And once you have asked yourself those questions, remember that you are nothing, compared to might of Salazar!"

Then he took a single step forward, and the banners that normally would hang from the ceilings during the parting fest came unbind and fell down, revealing symbols that had never before been seen. A golden S stood encrypted and encircled by snakes, all with a dark blue background. The symbol of Slytherin hung visible by the tapestries, and with the awed looks of those in the room, Harry tapped his chest with his fist.

"Things will change, Headmaster. I thought of staying in the background, of letting everything flow and bide my time. Apparently someone seeks confrontation: the fake heir is proof enough after all." The boy mused, "Now Headmaster, I have told my truth...what have you to say for yourself? Do you need further proof? Should I awaken the basilisk from the chamber," raucous murmurs and shrieks of fright ensued, "To prove my point? Should I unleash the might of Salazar upon the unworthy? And mind you, I'm not talking about muggleborns." Here he chuckled until it turned into a full out laugh again.

"I'm talking about certain scum that thinks kidnapping my friends and torturing them for information is fine. I'm speaking about people who hold no qualms...obliviating other people, and..." And then there was a brief strutting choke sound coming from the muggle studies professor, Gilderoy Lockhart, "And know this..." He hissed dangerously, "All the harm that is given shall be returned tenfold. That much, indeed, I swear!"

Albus merely smiled after few minutes of silence, before nodding his head slowly.

"Then it appears I owe you my excuses, Mr. Scamander. I am sorry I doubted your claims...would it be possible to have the tapestries back in their place?"

Harry's right eyebrow twitched. Was there anything that actually made the man angry!? Out of the entire room, the one that was currently showing more emotions was the muggle studies professor, who was apparently in the process of looking around for a quick way out of the castle probably. In any event, Harry nodded once stiffly and then returned to his place at the Ravenclaw table.

It took less than one minute for a volley of murmurs, questions and answers to fly around the tables. Harry's eyes instead caught for just

a second those of the Headmaster, and within those icy blue eyes he knew...he knew he had taken his side. He was in the game now. The question however was, would he win it?

At the professor's table, his 'mother' was wringing the cup with her hands, eying him carefully with a mixture of worry and...was that anger? His 'father' on the other hand was merely looking at Dumbledore and whispering to him. Whatever they were saying was drowned when a hand clapped against his shoulder.

"Well said!" Basileus cheerfully exclaimed, "It is not our past or our ancestors that defines us, but what we do with the present!" He was however the only one cheerful enough. The notion that he was indeed the real heir of Salazar would probably need time to sink in, but once it did, Harry held little doubt things would keep being the same way. Already a few were looking at him as if he was some sort of strange creature with multiple heads, while others whispered furiously while pointing at him.

"By the way, what was that piece of flashing red eyes when you said 'Salazar'?" Basileus asked interested, "It was quite well placed as a scenic prop."

Harry...blinked. What the hell?

Lucius Malfoy

The room was made of white and black marble, with stone column decorated through golden motifs in the form of leaves that climbed all the way towards the ceiling. There was a mahogany desk, with a Lucius Malfoy was currently reading the letters delivered to him by his close associates, when he heard laughter erupt outside of the door.

It took him a moment to compose himself and realize who had laughed. When he did, the speed with whom he left the room and reached for the Dark Lord's own was probably on par with that of a flying broom, albeit the man did manage to recollect himself outside of the door and politely knock.

"My Lord, is everything alright?"

"Come in, Lucius." The tone was there, the commanding obeying tone of Lord Voldemort that had made him immediately attracted by the man's power and charisma. As the Death Eater walked inside, he saw an owl with a bright white plumage standing perched against the window sill. His heart leaped. Could it mean?

"The plan is working well," Voldemort remarked, "And I must admit from my latest letters...it is proceeding way more than what we could have expected." The Dark Lord flexed his fingers, as its snake, Nagini, slithered its way into his lap from a dark corner of the room. "Pity for the philosopher's stone, it would have made my return from the dead far more pleasant than what it was...but if it isn't at Hogwarts..." Voldemort stood up, in his grace as a seventy one year old man he had not once hobbled or bent, his eyes were pitch black charcoal and his hair was a bright buzz-cut short white color. He was wearing a suit, dark green with a dark brown tie, and he looked far more like a muggle executive than one of the most powerful wizard in existence.

"My Lord, has...Has there been any news from the other parties?" Lucius nervously asked, his lips drying up as Nagini's head moved dangerously close to him, the tongue darting out to sniff the air.

"My faithful Death Eater," Voldemort began in a slow tone, "Severus is as elusive as ever, but I know that deep down he is a coward at heart. He will not fight if he can run." The old man shook his head carefully, "The other me, however, poses a problem." Nagini hissed in anger, as the rage of the wizard fanned through the room, making Lucius lose his own breath and gasp for air.

"Maybe Draco could..."

"Draco? No. Absolutely not." Voldemort snorted. "Do not give him orders he is not bound to complete, Lucius. If Harry is anything like our spy within the castle claims he is, then I may as well leave the matter of my other self to him before the end of the school year..." Silence ensued for few brief seconds, before Voldemort asked with his chilling and cold tone, "Have you found out anything about...our nuisance?"

"No, my Lord." Lucius squeaked, "I tried, but..."

"Lucius..." Voldemort sighed with a small smirk.

"Crucio."

Author's notes

And the real heir is out. Of course the fallout will be catastrophic in proportions. As for why Harry does not directly accuse Dumbledore, it is clear that firstly, nobody would believe him, (the high political quarters would without doubt side with Dumbledore) and secondly because leaving the threat hanging is always better than revealing the cards. That said, I suppose I should point out that the Voldemort of Malfoy and the Voldemort of Scamander are different, (the second is distinctively younger for one) as well as the Voldemort of the Diary of Hogwarts is different once more...or I might be lying.

Basileus is, of course, not an Oc Demilich from D&D but curse you for the plot bunny! Curse youuu! {joking}. By this point around you should have quickly realized that he is under Polyjuice. Who he is of course is open to debate, but you will find out. Probably.

What else? Oh right:

Andrew is actually a character from the dueling club in one of HP games, Harry's actions are increasingly going erratic and...well, the reason why Harry revealed his true self is quite easy to discern:

By becoming the true heir, he calls the 'fake' one (Who could be or not Tom Riddle of the Diary) the principal culprit, and since the only 'death' happened through a gory means, the Basilisk is discarded as 'weapon' of murder, and he can walk through the halls of Hogwarts as Heir...while the megalomaniac with Parseltongue tries to find a way out of his own predicament.

Yet it appears he played straight into Voldemort's hand...Who knows what will happen in the future?

Oh right, I do.

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 14

Lily Potter was nervous. Her daughter was petrified at St. Mungos, her husband was currently running to speak with Sirius, who had lost another relative, and Dumbledore was apparently ashen with his right hand trembling. The old wizard was probably risking a stroke if anything and it took Minerva herself to pry him away from the dining table. Severus was already gone, probably to potions, and she was now debating whether to walk back into the infirmary or not. She could floo-in to St. Mungos, visit her daughter, hoping that some Mandragora had matured before time...but it would be useless and the students needed her here.

As she settled down in the infirmary the door practically opened few seconds later, letting a Hufflepuff second year enter visibly skittering and afraid. The boy was practically white in fear as he stood warily within the boundaries of the door.

"Can I help you?" She asked gently, only for the boy to shake his head fast. Lily scrunched her face, "Why are you here then? Someone's hurt?" She just had to suppress the fact that her son, Harry, was basically the Heir of the wickedest of the founders, a parseltongue and the master of a basilisk. That creature alone stood at the height of the most dangerous and deadly creatures ever known to mankind! The Hufflepuff boy didn't reply to her question, instead kind of hesitating on the spot.

"Is there something you need? Otherwise, young man, shouldn't you be heading off towards your lessons, you know?" As she made a small smile in the boy's direction, she was surprised when the boy merely nodded quickly and then dashed off. The woman raised an eyebrow in surprise but said nothing. Maybe the Hufflepuff had wanted to speak with Madam Pomfrey, and instead had found her and hadn't been willing to share the trouble. Lily sighed as she began to look at the infirmary's supplies, it wasn't going to be a normal year at all...and Christmas had yet to come to begin with.

Albus Dumbledore

It was not shock that made the old wizard's hands tremble. It was not fright and it certainly was not fear. It was rage. He had always

prided himself of being able to perfectly keep a calm exterior, and yet in front of those glowing red eyes that so much made him remember Tom...his hand had trembled. He had wanted to hip out his wand and pulverize the boy where he stood, but he could not, and he knew perfectly well why. Even though he was the hero who ended up the war, the hero whom Voldemort feared, he was holding a strenuous position within Hogwarts at best.

The portraits had stopped appearing in his office, and the ghosts refused his calls. Peeves himself was more of a hassle than a mere addition to the castle, and somehow not only had the chamber of secrets been opened under his nose, but he knew that Harry knew. Harry's words had hit him, but the boy, while completely direct in some things, had kept the biggest bouts secret...because they could not be proved still, and Albus knew that someone had to have been training him.

If he had added anything directly to him, Albus had no doubts he could have crushed the boy through political clout alone, claim him a liar and force thus the Wizengamot to overrule the boy's claims on having complete control over the basilisk. Then he could merely have the beast killed, yet the boy hadn't brought the Wizengamot into it, but had merely implied offhandedly, and somehow...somehow his skill at Occlumency was greater than his. That went against all the reports that had the boy as nothing more than a hardworking boy who barely scraped by his classes, yet it didn't apparently matter when it came to his mind, and even Severus couldn't possibly be merited for it: the man had even yet to start a lesson with the boy.

The only positive thing would be Severus' private lessons: the man would eventually manage to get through the boy's defenses, as he always did. His potion master was after all ferociously loyal to the cause, and Dumbledore held against him the secret on who, truly, gave away the prophecy to Voldemort. The man wouldn't dare double cross him, or he would lose everything. Smiling lightly, he popped a lemon drop into his mouth just as Fawkes' plumage turned far more greyish and decaying. Within seconds, the phoenix burst into flames and died, only for the crying sound of an infant phoenix to soon come from the same spot covered in ashes.

"A pity." Albus whispered to no-one in particular in the room, "But small evil must be done for the greater good after all."

Ginny Weasley

She was trembling. The boy...the boy had really been the Heir of Slytherin. The...The diary had said it wasn't true but...but now Tom wasn't there for her and she...she felt at a loss. She should have gone to his side before. She should have known that anyone her brother hated was in truth far better than anyone else. She didn't know why of course, but she knew it had to be her fault everything was going so much down the drain. First it had been Slytherin, if only because that stupid journal...no, Tom, her wonderful friend, had convinced her to seek more, to have more, to be ambitious if for once in her life.

No, Tom had corrupted her and was an evil person, the journal had left her. Yet it wasn't possible...the journal wouldn't leave her side: someone had to know how to get inside the Slytherin's common room to grab it, right? There was no way...Tom was innocent. It...It had to be Harry. He had entered the common room the night before as if he owned the place, who was there to say he hadn't done so before, to steal her journal?

Apparently the Defense against the Dark Arts professor had been the only one in the faculty stricken by the news, although some murmured he had merely gone to warn the flying professor. So for that first period they did not have lesson and while everyone else either headed back to the common rooms or the library, the Ravensclaws still moving in their stupid formations that resembled praetorian legions marching to battle, she headed off towards the Hufflepuff boy. She could do this after all. She just had to...to tell him she was sorry, and ask forgiveness for having been forced.

Every Slytherin knew that excuse by heart. 'It wasn't my fault: I was paid to do it.' 'I didn't want to, but they forced me.' Things like those were common excuses, and while many times they did not work, it was never a waste of breath to try. She'd be damned if she didn't get on the winning side of this castle by the end of the first year. She could tolerate having to spend a horrendous summer with false smiles from her mother, because clearly she knew her mother wouldn't let her Slytherin-daughter in peace, but...but she couldn't be miserable both in school and out of it.

This time around, she'd stay by the side of the winner.

Neville Longbottom

Neville wasn't used being the center of the attention. He especially wasn't used being a group leader or anything like that. He was a Hufflepuff, technically, he was meant to follow and be loyal about it. He wasn't meant to answer questions about if he knew or not of who Harry really was beforehand, or if he believed in him or even if he had been a part of a conspiracy to have him present himself as Heir in front of everyone.

He didn't even know Harry was the heir of Slytherin till then! How could they come up and ask him questions about it? Like what the chamber of secrets was like, if he had ever explored it, or if the basilisk was actually there. Some even asked him if he knew what Harry could do. Some rumors claimed the Heir could twist reality and bend necks by merely hissing words in parseltongue, others claimed he could make fire pour down from the skies and transform into a basilisk himself.

Of course Neville had done his best to claim them untrue...by blubbering and stuttering most of the time, but when some students come up and ask you how Harry actually managed to survive the stare of the basilisk, because some rumor claimed it was a rite of passage for the Heir of Salazar, what else could he say? The entire school was in uproar: the student body was completely and utterly out of their wits, many already making lines to write back home to their parents and families.

The words concerning what organization Harry wished to create at Hogwarts was also on the mouth of everyone. Some claimed he would rise as a Dark Lord while others went by the romantic plot of a dark Hero ascending to light. A few even hinted at romance with his sister, and frankly Neville didn't want to hear about that.

The true problem was that now, at potions, Harry was right next to him and grinning as if he had won the lottery. People pointed at him and stared and whispered, and all the boy did was act just like some sort of poster boy. Yet behind those green eyes, Neville saw flickers of coldness and hatred, intermixing with something else, something so wrong it made him tremble at the mere thought. Was this the feeling of standing by the side of an Heir of the Founders? Was this the feeling of standing next to a turning wheel of fate? He

understood then, as he chopped down asphodel roots: history was in the making, and he could choose whether to be a part of it, or watch from the sidelines.

Strangely, the idea scared him down to the depths of his wits and beyond.

He couldn't even keep track of his toad, for Merlin's sakes! Who was he to stand by the side of people who would be jolted down in history!?

Draco Malfoy

He had to write home of course. This news was too big to just leave unscathed, but it wasn't as if he could actually skip the potion's master lesson now, could he? Severus Snape was the head of House Slytherin, and unless a student was on his death bed, the order to follow the lessons was mandatory on pain of... Well, death would have been kinder than scrubbing cauldrons with a toothbrush.

Yet he didn't know if he should do so. Should he write home to his father? Normally, he'd counsel to his mother, and then she would edit his letters and deliver them to him in such a way as to keep out what needed to be kept a secret and what not. His mother was in St. Mungos however, and last he had heard she was making no sign of recovery at all, being kept in the private ward.

It felt strange seeing eyes pointed at Harry, who was behind him. He didn't dare to turn his gaze to stare of course, the professor seemed pretty much on the way of explosion, and yet he couldn't help but try and believe this was just another normal day. It was strange how different from normal it was though.

The only thing missing would be...

"Mr. Scamander, why use the flat side of the blade for the roots and not the sharp side?" His godfather queried with a stern and monotonous drawl.

"Because the amount of juice obtained is higher that way, professor." Draco heard Harry's voice answer, hesitantly so, right back. It was normal. For once the voice was something normal that he could relate to. It was just like the old Harry. Not like the one who

seemed incredibly taken out of the book on 'one hundred and one ways to self-discern if you're a dark lord'. Draco stiffened silently as Severus nodded...and said nothing more.

He did not hand out points for the correct answer. Soon the murmur of the change in treatment rang through the classroom. Everyone expected exactly the opposite from the professor: to make some snide remark on how, of course, only the Heir of Slytherin could enter another house and become a clearly future premier potion maker, or assign something like fifty points in a row.

The cold shoulder wasn't what Draco was expecting his godfather to do.

The fact he felt hotly about it however, that was far more shocking. Was he reverting into a fan boy, of all things? Definitely not.

Tom Riddle

How dared he? How dared the son of a filthy mudblood claim his own superiority on him!? He would have his revenge! He'd let him be lulled in a sense of complacency, and then he would strike him where it would hurt! He had to trudge carefully though. Albeit he did believe Grindelwald to be on his side, it wouldn't do to appear weak. Thankfully the agent within Hogwarts had moved his diary from the stupid red haired girl to another boy, before the girl could suspect anything.

He was kind of wondering how much the girl would enjoy it, to know she had been possessed into trying to open the chamber and writing with blood upon the ceiling of the hall.

Still...someone else was within the castle surely; someone who apparently held no qualms in using his name to kill and to give the fault where it did not lay. Whoever had killed that horrendous babbling first year of a Gryffindor had done the world a favor, but on the other hand it had displeased him.

Lord Voldemort did not tolerate displeasures. He'd make sure everything would go as planned. Everything.

Hermione Granger

She hadn't expected the Girl-Who-Lived brother to be the Heir of Slytherin and Ravenclaw. Of course, the tales spun about the 'evil brother' were rampant in Gryffindor, especially after what the boy had done last year had come into view. She was kind of surprised the Headmaster hadn't already called the boy into his office, but it didn't much matter to her.

She was currently trying to avoid that utter imbecile of a Weasley git from ruining her potion by adding things ahead of time. That alone required her full attention.

Carefully avoiding the stern glare of the professor, she slowly began to take notes on the color and the time to leave the potion to simmer, before frisking out from her school bag a small candy and popping it into her mouth.

She needed sugar to survive Hogwarts with that imbecilic horror of a Weasley next to her, and without the Girl-Who-Lived mitigating factor, she was starting to grow wary. Maybe she could try and curse him with something?

"So you'll go with me?" Ron asked in a low murmur, as if the professor hadn't the possibility to hear him as bright as the day.

"Mr. Weasley! Ten points from Gryffindor, no talking in class!" The red haired boy looked abashed, but his look went to her face nevertheless.

She hadn't even heard half of what the red haired boy had said, but still...she shook her head.

"Homework." She mouthed without letting out a single sound. Severus did not turn of course, because she knew how to whisper...and it clearly wasn't done the same way as the Weasley.

Ron Weasley

He clenched his fists as he looked down on the cauldron. How could Hermione not understand? It was pretty clear the murderer had to be someone within the forbidden forest. If only he could find someone else to go with, everything would be fine. It wasn't because he was a coward of course: it was just because he didn't like spiders. They had too many legs to be natural after all, and with

their fur? They were the source of nightmare incarnate, all right, that was what those nasty creatures were!

His gaze lingered to the other in the class. Who could he ask? Seamus? Maybe the Nigerian exchange student? Maybe he should try with an upperclassman, or maybe even with someone from another house. Hell, if he was so keen on going there, he could outright ask Harry and his pet basilisk for help. He doubted the snake would be that difficult to aid in the quest of catching the real murderer now, would he?

Unless...unless this was all a ploy from the boy's part. If he had committed the murders, if he had actually sanctioned some murderer of sorts and let him loose into Hogwarts, then he could act as a hero for capturing him, and he going into the forest with the boy would spell his death. No. Harry was definitively out of the question. Just like his right and left hand men too. It didn't take a genius to see how the boy had practically surrounded himself with Neville, Hufflepuff who belonged to a highly prestigious old blood family, and Draco who was practically the antithesis of all the boy had spoken of at breakfast.

For all he knew, the blond haired boy already had the Dark Mark since the time of his birth! Death Eaters' spawns were like that after all.

So...he'd really have to go alone. He'd use the invisibility cloak he had taken in loan from Lillian, and with that everything would be fine. There was no way the murderer would see him coming, and then, once he'd drag the beast back in the castle, or the murderer, he would be rewarded and his mother would be proud of him.

He should have actually written home by then. Mom was frothing to know what had happened to share it with her neighbors and friends over the floo-network. Yet he didn't know how to broach the subject of Ginny being a Slytherin...he knew his mother would have a heart attack. He knew it.

Maybe, if he did get caught he could let it slip of Ginny's 'house' and get off lightly. That was an underhanded method actually, but in sibling rivalry it was an unspoken rule to use another's brother or sister's mistake to lower the fault of one's own.

He'd wait a bit though. No use running to face the murderer in the forest on that precise day.

He'd go, maybe, on Friday afternoon.

Harry Scamander

Potion class was uneventful. Well, barring the people staring at him like he was some sort of slab of meat or a murderous maniac on the loose. Herbology had him stare deadily in the eyes of a mandrake and see the slobbering wench of a plant stop crying. Rumors flew of his mystical eye powers few minutes later, but really...Neville had explained about the pressure point near the roots that made the damn things shut up.

He shouldn't be angry actually. He should feel excited, happy, or any other range of emotion that wasn't anger but...he felt angry. Angry at the sycophant mongrels who dared beseech h...He growled in frustration. Something, somewhere, had broken like a dam and something else had begun to pour with the howling strength of a werewolf stampede on a full moon clear night of a cold winter time.

If the archaic thoughts that lingered in his mind were of any indication, he had half a feeling it was just like a possession of sort. One that he was battling silently and with little effect, if the fact that he believed Madam Sprout to be an 'overly obsessive compulsive eater with schizophrenic tendency' had rooted into his mind few moments after staring at the plump woman that he knew was nothing of the sorts.

There was so much hatred flowing through his head at the moment that it was a wonder his wand wasn't already in his hand, ready to strike and kill the babbling masses that couldn't even properly grovel at his feet. Harry knew he'd have to kill the Bloody Baron eventually: the damn bastard had to be somewhat responsible for his corrupted thought patterns, but the rage was still slowly building up and he did not want to lash out in public.

Maybe he could go by the lake and tear down a couple of trees?

Maybe he'd do that.

Severus Snape

At first, he had thought about taking the kid apart, obliviate his knowledge of the chamber of secrets and then do nothing more. Then, of course, the brat had outright confessed in the morning Albus had called him to the 'public' and...and Severus had done his best of course, but it hadn't sufficed to repress the small tugged smirk on the side of his face. This didn't of course change the end year plan, but it did bring things into a new perspective.

Had the boy been a real Slytherin, he would have kept that knowledge of the chamber for himself. Already he knew ways in which Bellatrix could profit from it, and by consequence, the dark lord. There was no way a secret this big could be kept away, not even if Dumbledore suddenly managed to stop all owls from leaving the castle, and with the winter vacations approaching...it was but a matter of time.

Maybe he should try taking the boy sooner than the end of the year, but he hadn't even begun his lessons had he? He doubted he could just walk near him, ask him if he wanted to see something in the room of requirements, and then fling him through the only secret and safe passage that led to Hogsmeade that would not alert Albus.

Still, as he walked nervously through the halls to his second period lesson, he couldn't help but feel skittish. Something was definitively wrong with the boy. He couldn't quite put his finger on it, but whatever it was, it made him uneasy.

He who lied without flinching to both Dumbledore and Voldemort was uneasy at looking in the eyes of the boy.

It didn't bode well actually...not a single bit.

Bellatrix Scamander

She slowly folded the well written letter of Severus. Her son was the heir of Salazar. She calmly paced towards the floo, but stopped her hand just as she was about to throw a pinch of powder in that could have taken her to see the Dark Lord. No, Severus had told her that Harry needed far more guidance than he had expected. That in order to keep his powers as Heir of Salazar he would need intensive

training. A type of training that would require him to remain at Hogwarts during Christmas.

She didn't want to pass up on having a nice, warm Christmas dinner with her wonderful son. He had such nice bright eyes and he looked like some sort of wet chick most of the times that he was just...adorable. She was already thinking about, maybe, popping up at Hogwarts to hug him to death for such a delightful discovery. Her son was the Heir of Salazar! How wonderful was it, to belong to such a powerful wizard's line?

She knew the Dark Lord had trusted her with him because of that, even though he hadn't told her she just knew it had to be because of her status in the Death Eaters. She'd teach her son well, and the dark lord would be happy. Yes! Everything would be fine...maybe she could go and visit him? But...she didn't want to pamper him actually. Severus had said something about not being excessively present for a while, because her adorable young boy was working on building for himself a powerbase filled with purebloods!

Bellatrix was humming happily through the house, jumping from side to side like a schoolgirl playing one of those street games where you have to jump in squares while singing a merry song. Maybe she could send Harry a gift? But what would he like?

She began to frown. Christmas was nearing, and she knew her wonderful son would need a wonderful gift, but what could she offer? What indeed...

She clapped her hands suddenly while squealing in delight: of course!

She'd send him the most wonderful gift ever. The one the Dark Lord had asked her to keep! So he'd know she trusted him to do the right thing and protect it! She gingerly laughed to herself...and then...then she'd give him a surprise visit during Christmas.

And she'd punish him for not having written to her immediately.

She'd punish him until he would become a sobering mess of tears and pain on the floor, wretched and torn apart by his very own nerves.

And when that would be done...

She'd have a healthy, nice, private, homely, family Christmas dinner with him.

Sirius Black

"Is this really how we want to ask him? Hey, you know I was meant to be your godfather, now please tell me how we can access the Chamber of Secrets to make sure any Dark object is being properly disposed of?" Sirius raised an eyebrow as he said that, "Prongs, mate, I'm pretty sure that is not going to end well."

James Potter sighed, shaking his head slowly before replying. The two of them were heading within the castle, lunch hour already rolled by, and he had just realized the full implications of what it meant for a second year student to have access to the Chamber of Secrets of Salazar bloody Slytherin.

"Look: we don't know what might be in there. Well, we know of the Basilisk alright, and as much as I'm against having such a dangerous beast beneath the bloody school, it doesn't appear to have woken up, and you know the motto of the school."

"Never tickle a sleeping dragon." Sirius repeated rolling his eyes, "Which is what we are going to do. Let the boy breathe James. I didn't see him at all during the first year, heck! He's even exonerated from flying lessons and hasn't been to a single Quidditch match. He's taken everything from your wife all right? You can't just barge in and order him to lead the way. Chances are he'd clam up and ignore you."

"I'm the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, Sirius." James pointed out, "And if I managed to remove the bloody curse on the position, then I sure as hell can take care of a rowdy teen."

"I'm with you, James...but I've got a bad feeling about this." If only he knew just how much he had been right about it...

Maybe he could have avoided the confrontation.

Heather Watson

She hated the dingy and cold atmosphere of the closed off chamber. She rather enjoyed it when her master was around, because the warmth was something really wonderful to feel. Crawled within the closed off mouth of Salazar, she stared in the darkness at nothing much in particular. She didn't know why her master had given her some sort of hideous strange contraptions made of wool, but she knew better than to ask.

Slowly, she felt tremors echo through the chamber, footsteps coming her way. She began to tense, her tail slightly vibrating from happiness. It might be her master after all: he was the only one who could enter the chamber, couldn't he?

She saw the mouth of stone open, and a figure down, upon the rock bridge. The figure was pale, holding between his hands a...a rooster.

Heather tensed. It wasn't her master.

The strange creature spoke, but she couldn't hear him. She didn't need to.

She struck with the strength of her mass against the worthless maggot who had dared to bring a rooster in the chambers: her fangs gleaming with the poison that she knew could kill anything within seconds. The boy was torn apart within her maws and then, with a sickening gulp, of the diabolical murderer nothing more remained. The rooster itself had been squashed by her coils and as she hummed patiently...

Her stomach felt a bit queasy actually.

She grumbled as she slithered her way back into the mouth of Salazar. She needed to ask her master just why she had to wear those horrible purple things...

Couldn't he at least give her a slick green and brown color? Why did her earmuffs have to be purple!?

Salazar Slytherin

There was a crowd in front of the architect statue, by the time the lessons were over. He had expected a couple of students more than usual, but what he hadn't expected was a full-fledged crowd

composed by the practically half of the students, with the other half in tow barely within ear.

He felt nervous as the eyes settled on him, was he actually going to do it? Well, it wasn't as if he could now come up and yell out loud 'I've changed my mind, no more Fuhrer-speech for you lot!' or similar.

Was this how Mussolini felt when Hitler forced him to return to Italy, and start the Salo Republic? It certainly felt like the force of the masses always had a strong pull on him, if the way his feet were gliding him in front of the architect statue was of any indication.

His stomach felt queasy, and cold sweat was pouring down his back. Just why had he thought he could do this? Too many eyes were present. Too many eyes were there watching and judging him. He...He was so lost in there that...

"Let...Me...Let me."

"Uh?" Harry thought, as his right hand shot forward practically on its own, obtaining the silence from the crowd as his legs brought him to climb upon the pedestal of the architect.

"The Architect of Hogwarts," he began, "built this school together with Rowena Ravenclaw, Salazar Slytherin, Helga Hufflepuff, and Godric Gryffindor." And the last only stared at the damn thing and grunted a 'good, where's the wine?' at the end of it. "He belonged to no house, since none had been founded at the present, and yet he built this school, to encompass them all. Believe not those who claim the divisions happened immediately. For years the school stood united, giving birth to great men who belonged not to Slytherin, Ravenclaw or Hufflepuff, but to Hogwarts, for a school is made by its people, and its people make it a school...houses are...an abomination." He hissed.

"What!? No! Wai..."

"Mr. Scamander, I find it difficult to comprehend how you can spout such words with conviction. Competition between the houses is what has brought forth great persons, Merlin himself was sorted into Slytherin," McGonagall began, "And it was only due to his rivalry with Morgana of Ravenclaw that both..."

"Is that so?" The tone was amused, that much he...Harry? Knew, "Were you there, or did you read upon books written by victors? Was that truth or a merely falsely shaded lie? You should know that knowledge can be colored by multiple tints. 'Dark' and 'Light' are merely two of the possible shades. And isn't there competition even among classmates of a same house? Why then the need for a separation, no... a segregation, when you could just remove the houses? Why does Hogwarts have four towers, and yet half of the houses live in dungeons, away from the light of the day? You think it's normal? You think it's equal? Are you so blind, or were you fed such lies since the early age? Why is the Slytherin dungeon built beneath the lake? Does anyone of the present know!? I do! And I do because the architect written journals claim the dungeons as a prison for the criminals, a prison where, at the flick of a wand, the lake itself could drown them to their death!"

"Who are you?" Harry asked, but no reply came as his eyes stared into the masses of shocked and grim filled faces of the Slytherin.

"Mr. Scamander...Are you certain of your claims?" Professor Flitwick voice was filled with a bit of anguish and...anxiousness. The tiny professor was as much stricken as some of the Slytherin students, of whom a few held their hands to their throats in a clear sign of shock. Harry didn't expect them to feel anything else: how would anyone feel knowing they had been sleeping in a death trap for years?

"As certain as I am that the East tower used to be the real Hufflepuffs dorms, as sure as I am that you will find upon the walls of the North tower small signs that once Salazar Slytherin used to inhabit the highest of its rooms, oh, but you know the North tower with another name after all," he sneered, "The 'Dark' tower. You did turn it into a prison, removed all content from Salazar's chambers and sold it to the highest bidder of the goblin nations...did you not?" The question felt rhetorical, at least to...Harry. He chuckled, and his chuckle was raucous and deep.

"The peak of Hypocrisy at its finest, and yet here you stand asking me why I seek to change this school? I am but a student. Take note of this. I might be the Heir of Salazar or maybe Salazar himself reborn but know this: this school is rotten and I will change it!" He roared feeling filled with glee at the sight of the whimpering children taking a step back. "You are hereby called by me, not as Harry

Scamander, or as Harry Dursley, or even as some might claim Harry Potter, but as mere and simple Harry, to make a stand. Here and now I ask of you to choose: will you pledge loyalty to a cause that will devour and destroy the foundations of magical Britain as it stands? Will you fight against the wrong and rotten ideals that society imposed on you since birth? Will you fight for equality of treatment, disregarding everything else? Will you fight side by side with others, regardless of house, blood, race, sex or background? If you do, if you really do, then know that I shall fight alongside you. Changes are not made alone by mortal man! They are made by a force that encompasses hundreds! Are you with me!? Are you ready to change Hogwarts, and then Britain!? Are you ready to bring justice into a world that has none? If you are...then follow. If you don't...then leave! I swear I will not harm those who merely seek to ignore life and walk in the sidelines; I swear I will not hurt those who will not take on a side. But know this: no-one can truly stay neutral. True neutrality does not exist!"

Harry breathed slowly, as ripples of sweat descended from his temples and his robes flailed around, whatever it was, he felt determined. He felt different. Just like that morning in the dining hall, just like that...he had just talked and the students were looking at him. They were looking at him. Some with eagerness befitting naivety and some with a glint of interest, a few were positively shocked and a couple more looked green with fright. Some were trembling and others were instead clenching their fists in firm resolve.

The oldest students began to trickle away, speaking slowly among themselves. That was a given, considering how nobody who was preparing for Owls or Newts had time to stay and play stupid fantasies like 'change the school' and 'change magical Britain'. Words that a twelve year old kid had no place to say after all...barely green behind the ears to begin with.

A couple of fifth years were actually debating it, but in the end the vast majority of them left, followed by the professors who appeared vastly appalled by such a display.

"Remember if you are to found a club, you will need a teacher to represent you." Were the only words the deputy headmistress sourly pointed out before turning around and leaving...probably to verify his claims on selling to goblins the stuff of Salazar.

In the end, most of the crowd had been there only to listen to the heir of Salazar speech, not to actually join him.

Those who remained, however, were more than enough to let Harry crack a smile.

It was a start.

It was a beginning for his rebirth.

Now if only he could find a way to keep his schizophrenic half from getting the best of him...He might be at the head of a kingdom who would live for but half a year...but it had taken him far less effort to actually destroy his sister's reputation at school, so with his actual effort...how much would it take?

Author's note

And we're on to the start of the King's men club. And another student died. Eaten.

This chapter was more of a 'post-reaction' thing than an actual plotted chapter, but we're not even done through all of it.

Btw: yes, the dark tower exists in canon, and thus it's not difficult to suspect also another tower...which actually makes you think why they had to have two houses up in the sky and two beneath the ground, and the Slytherin halfway beneath the lake? Really? Security issues anyone?

To Junky: The rooster sound was taken care of. Earmuffs. The ones normally used for Mandragoras, I admit Harry took the idea from there. Apparently it worked. Furthermore Bellatrix took the news pretty well, didn't she?

Yeah. Lots of love in that family.

Next chapter: we will see who's in the club and who isn't. Don't expect everything to sail smoothly of course...no, if you know me and my stories...don't expect anything to begin with. Trust me.

Or better yet don't.

Hope you enjoyed! See ya (now I'm jinxing myself) tomorrow with another update!

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 15

His hands slowly touched the wooden door that would lead to the Founder's room, hidden behind the architect's statue. Within seconds, a small parchment emerged from the cracks within the door's wooden frame, composing itself with a wavy font traced in red ink for capital letters and bright blue for the small ones. The margins were traced by light green foliage, and at the lower border stood a single phrase written in jet black.

So mote it be.

He turned around carefully, taking slow steps to reach back to where the remaining students stood in wait, some nervously murmuring one to the other. As he reached them, their voices dwindled down to a bare minimum, and in the end died out completely. He coughed lightly to gather their attention.

"Ahem." He began, "Behind the Architect's statue lays the Founder's room. The room was also the place where the Four Founders themselves vowed to teach their students to their best capacity, and is of course invisible and inaccessible unless you share the founder's blood, or receive written permission by one of said blood." As the parchment was brought forward, the architect's statue moved. The statue, of gold and bronze, moved its giant hand downwards, upon whom a quill too big to even be considered for writing stood.

Small gasps echoed in the crowd, and if anything he knew that such a small display of magic, such a small display of his ability, would be enough to convince many to at least sign.

"Come forward and state your name to the cause of the King, then proceed behind the architect's statue to the door." He intoned, "Do not worry; it's not an unbreakable vow or anything like that. It's just a list to make sure you can enter the clubroom." Harry added as he saw the queasy looks on the people there, the tone lapsing from serious and solemn to more down to earth and gentle.

There were sighs of relief after those words though, and with those came the start of the names. Hesitantly at first, in the end all it took

was the brown haired and glass wearing Tracey to be the first to move forward, gathering her courage with every step.

"Tracey Davis." The girl gave him a wink, making a mock curtsy as she then added, "Let's rock, King." She scampered to the side of the statue, disappearing from sight for a moment, until the clack of a door opening and closing came from behind them, and with that the rest moved far faster.

"Draco Malfoy." The blond haired boy walked stiffly, nodding with his face to Harry before walking out of sight behind the statue. There were low murmurs following that act, many in disbelief over the fact that a pureblood Slytherin was apparently giving his name to a cause that went so much against everything his family had stood for. Yet that did not stop a Hufflepuff from moving forward.

"Justin Finch-Fletchley." The Hufflepuff stated his name clearly, before gingerly adding to Harry. "We'll be writing history, and a Hufflepuff will be in it finally." The boy had brown hair and dark eyes, and as he delivered his little 'speech' he walked proudly behind the statue. Harry sighed. He'd have to explain that there would be no 'Hufflepuffs' or 'Slytherins' afterwards.

"Hannah Abbott." The girl was a bit nervous, her blond hair tied in pony-tails as her blue eyes looked over to Harry for something. He smiled back at her, and with a quick nod the girl walked behind the statue as fast as she could.

"Seamus Finnigan." The round faced boy had sandy hair and blue eyes, his robes bore the symbols of Gryffindor, and while his eyes were clearly displaying his nervousness, he merely shook his head hard to mutter. "Not all Gryffindors are dorks...Let's tear down the houses, alright?" Harry nodded with a light smile, and the boy apparently gathered enough courage from that to move on.

"Kevin Entwhistle." The boy held a rectangular face with short cropped brown hair and dark eyes, his look wasn't nervous though, as he stated his name and then proceeded past the statue without much of a word. He was a Ravenclaw though, one he hadn't much talked to at all.

"Ginevra Weasley." The Slytherin Weasley walked up to him nervously, shyly keeping her head down as she wrapped her arms

around herself. "I...I'm with you King!" She nervously exclaimed, before dashing behind the statue. Harry rolled his eyes at such a display, before staring at the remaining student in the hall.

"Hermione Granger." The girl with bushy brown hair said the name easily, but nothing appeared written upon the parchment. She scrunched an eyebrow up in surprise, only for Harry to do the same. He didn't know what laws governed this type of magic, but apparently it related to stating one's own name for...trust? So maybe the girl simply didn't believe in him, and she was there but to spy. It could also be that there were only just so much people the quill would write within a day or things like that.

"Never mind then." Hermione muttered hastily, before turning tails and running away quickly. Harry didn't try to stop her, instead turning to the architect's statue and blinking in surprise as the statue resumed its normal form with the parchment scroll safely encased in bronze and held in the statue's other hand. It was kind of strange, actually. On one side he hadn't expected it, but on the other he actually had. It was as if he knew what certain things in the castle did, and at the same time a part of him didn't.

Deciding not to dwell on the argument any longer, he too walked around the statue of the architect, to enter within the room and close the door behind him. The seven applicants to the club, albeit calling it club was actually a bit debasing, looked at him enter with a strange uneasiness. The small miniature of the Hogwarts castle that normally would have stood at the center of the round table within the founders' room was gone, replaced with a very elaborate golden tea trail, with eight cups.

The table itself had changed, and instead of being what Harry remembered, it was now perfectly circular, with eight seats all identical in form, kind of reminding him of the tale of King Arthur and the round table actually.

"Stop whining Godric. The table is round. There isn't a higher place."

"Then why is your chair higher, Salazar?"

"Because I'm smaller than you, sit and it will adjust so that all stare at each other at the same height."

Harry blinked as he gestured for the others to take their seats, just as he took his own. Quickly the noise of the scuttling of the chairs gave way to silence once more, and as they all stared at one another, the tea cups suddenly sprung to life floating in front of each of them, together with their contents.

"The service is good at least." Justin said, trying to break the ice.

"Are you the one doing all of this, Scamander?" Kevin queried, his face scrunched up in thought of the apparent usage of some wandless magic.

"Call me Harry," he said back, "And no. I think it's the room itself. Castle is filled with magic, quite a lot of things are pretty different from what they seem, and far more do far too much than what they should." Somehow, Harry's words brought him to think about the seventeenth bathroom stall in the castle up in the sixth floor. That one could be used to clog all other bathrooms.

Just why the architect had decided to place it there was a mystery to him, just as why he thought it warranted enough attention too, but it was better to just let it go and move forward. His eyes travelled to the sides of the room, where once shelves of books stood and now windows that let the light of the outside flow within were. Out of all the changes though, the most important was that the ceiling had taken on the form of a mirror surface, and strangely enough it appeared as if it could let him see anything reflected upon it that stood on the table.

The room itself was perfect to conduct honest meetings, because it ensued no way for one to be treated unequally from another, and because it prevented cheating.

"Betrayals from the outside...can destroy the gilded cages of truth..."

Harry blinked. The voice was starting to grow neater with time, more definite. It felt like having some sort of Gollum while he was the Smeagle. If this was the after effect of the Crucio coupled with the Obliviate, he had no idea. He knew he wasn't actually mad, not completely at least. If he could cut off on the punishment, then maybe he'd return to sanity.

"I am sure you have questions." Harry began slowly, "So let us start with just a bit of a preamble: no title calling. No house stereotyping. From the moment you stepped through that door, there is no Gryffindor, Slytherin, Hufflepuff or Ravenclaw. There is Hogwarts. We are all Hogwarts students. This is the basic concept. I suppose all of you can understand this."

Seven nods came back to him, and so he continued. "Now, I do not know many of you, but I suppose the first thing we should do is get to know each other: the world will not change in one day, and Britain will not be controlled in a fortnight. I think we can start by going from the one in front of me and work our way clockwise." As soon as he said that, the girl in front of him on the other side of the round table nodded, before standing slightly up from the chair.

"I'm...Hannah, Hannah Abbott; my mother's a witch while my father is a muggle, I'm a half-blood." She began, only for Harry to raise his right hand in a 'no' gesture.

"There is no need for explaining the blood status of one. None here care." The looks of disbelief went not to him this time, but to Draco, who was uneasily looking around at being the center of the attention, "Sorry, please continue." Harry added, and so Hannah queasily began once more.

"Well, I like Herbology, but I'm afraid I'm a dunce in it too..." She muttered the last words, "I...I'm not really much of a talker really, and I'm...kind of...well..." She dropped back down on her seat, her hands in front of her face as she was probably turning a reddish color from embarrassment. Not that Harry thought it was possible to actually turn another color, but being flustered was perfectly normal.

Harry's eyes settled on the boy next to her, Seamus Finnigan, who with a rich Irish accent began to speak.

"Well, me name's Seamus, Finnigan Seamus. I like fireworks and apparently my wand agrees: burned the feather instead of making it fly ya see at charms and the likes. I'm a bit tired of all that anger going around Hogwarts. Can't fault the other houses since it's true the Weasley prank hard; I'm here to show that it's not the house that makes the person, but it's the heart of the student that makes him." He finished by lightly tapping his chest with his right hand, before passing the word to the Ravenclaw next to him.

"I'm Kevin Entwhistle." The dark haired boy began slowly, "I like reading, and watching old western films. My father got treated bad one day in Diagon alley by a witch only because he was a muggle. I hate that word: muggle, like they're 'muggers' or something like that. I want to change that. We're in the twentieth century: it's time for the wizard world to know what it means."

Harry nodded, and then the word went to the only first year of the group, the Slytherin Weasley. The girl appeared nervous as she stood up. Her skin appeared far paler than usual, as if she hadn't seen the light of the day in a long time. Her eyes were haunted, and her red hair was sort of a lighter and paler shade than usual. Still, the red contrasted well enough with the green of her Slytherin robes.

"I'm Ginevra Weasley," the girl began slowly, her head downcast; "Ginny is usually what I'm called by the rest of my family." She took a small breath, before continuing, "I like playing Quidditch and I know a mean Bat-Bogey hex: I'm not one who goes down without a fight." She finished, with her eyes narrow and her fists clenching. Well, at least she was serious and driven.

Harry nodded to the girl, who was at his right, and then stood up to speak.

"I'm Harry. I'm still debating my surname, so just call me Harry," he said with a small smile on his lips, "I've decided on this club because I felt the need to do something." He started, "People think that as long as everything is fine, then there's no need for change...but who decides what is fine? Who decides when 'fine' means turning the head the other way? Who decides that no change is necessary, even if it harms all in the long run? I do not believe things should stay the way they are. We must change ourselves and those near us, now that we can do something. To do nothing is just to worsen the situation for all." He took a deep breath as he sat back down. "We will change Hogwarts."

"Well," the girl to his left began, "I'm Tracey Davis. I like to listen to rock music, and I've got all the Beatles collection at home. I like reading Dickens' books and well, I hope the school can go back to being normal. I'd really hate to see it closed down."

Draco looked nervous, as the girl sat down and it became his turn to stand up. Slowly, as if he was fighting against himself, the blond haired boy stood up from his chair.

"Hello." He squeaked out, as if his voice had given away in the middle of the word. "I'm Draco." He said, "I'm good at Potions. That's all." Then he sat back down. Nervous. Harry raised an eyebrow in surprise. He hadn't thought the boy had nothing to say except that; he clearly did have at least more than one interest or things to share, after all it wasn't as if he had grown up in...

Oh. That was the reason. Draco was after all the son of a Death Eater: if he couldn't speak of blood status, of pure blood policies and of Slytherin's prowess...then he had little to say. He had probably been groomed into being a perfect Magical Nazi. Yet here he was, entering what seemed like the birthing spot of a new Communism, and he was even trying his best. It was kind of strange though. He would have thought Draco wouldn't have stayed, while instead Neville...

Neville not staying around had been a bad hit. He had thought the boy would have remained with him. He had shared the secrets of the chamber and of the room of requirements with him and yet the boy had left him there. Draco instead had remained. If it was because of teenager rebellion or not, Harry didn't know of course, but what he knew was that he would consider Draco a friend too; just like he had thought Neville to be.

"Well I'm Justin." The last one spoke, "I'm friends with Hannah here," he added pointing to the girl with a bobbing gesture of his head, "And I like Lockhart's books. Especially Magical Me is his best work in my opinion: he truly had a tragic upbringing, having to face both Dragon Pox and a curse and breaking them both during his third year of school in order to reach his fourth and give his OWLS sooner." The boy pointed out, earning a rolling eye from Hannah.

"As if he actually did that!"

"He was in Ravenclaw wasn't he?" Kevin pointed out, "Wouldn't that mean he'd be smart enough to get his owls sooner?"

"Yes, but then again he wouldn't have received permission to attend school, had he had Dragon Pox." Tracey remarked, "I mean: I had

Dragon Pox when I was little, it's really contagious and you can't just go to school with it."

For a few more minutes, the discussion took a pleasant turn with people speaking one to the other, until Draco idly remarked.

"Shouldn't we start discussing on how we are going to change the school?" He pointed out offhandedly, as the rest of the club members owlshly nodded.

Harry hadn't actually realized it, but his mouth spoke before he could say anything.

"Of course: it was not by happenchance that I chose to speak about Slytherin and Hufflepuff's dormitories and where they should rightfully be today." He began slowly. "As you know, the Dark Tower has..." and the center of the table folded itself into a parchment that sprung from within its paper the miniature of Hogwarts in its splendor. It then zoomed on towards the Dark Tower, displaying not only its levels but also the wards placed within and all that it held, as if the walls were made of glass.

It was, in one word, just like looking at those holographic things that were in the science-fiction films. There was no-one in the tower though, except a couple of ghosts that merely hovered around.

"Wicked." Ginny whispered short of breath.

"Damn awesome." Justin's two cents added.

"Well...I'll be..." Seamus stared in awe.

"As I was saying," Harry continued, trying his best to look unaffected by the strange magic happening around the table, "The Dark Tower was once the Slytherin's real dormitories." Suddenly, another tower similar in size to the Dark one appeared right next to the first one, however this one's interiors were draped a soft luscious green and held many levels similar to those of Gryffindor and Ravenclaw's own.

"Oh." He mouthed. "Well, anyway the idea was to do the same with Hufflepuff's tower and convince the student population to move into their respective real dormitories. We should start working on getting the old look of the towers back into the new ones, and then...well,

that should work into endearing ourselves to the general Hogwarts population."

"That would take months!" Hannah exclaimed, "And the Hufflepuff's dormitories are fine! They're cozy and warm." At her words, Justin nodded.

"I can see why you'd want to change the Dark Tower back into the Slytherins dorms, but why not let the professors do it?"

"In nineteen twenty-two Fascism rose to power through a show of strength called 'The march on Rome'." Harry began slowly, "However only with strength it would not have lasted. A power with no people behind is not a power at all." The boy explained, "The Fascists were pretty much the watered down versions of the Nazi, who we can compare to 'muggle' Death Eaters."

The muggle-born and half-blood students nodded, since they had been living in the normal world, some things had been picked up. Ginny Weasley merely listened enraptured, or faking it well enough for Harry to believe it anyway. Draco's face was frowning lightly at his words, but it then morphed into a small grin.

"To keep the power, Mussolini enacted laws and passed edicts that generally increased the well-being of much of the population." He began carefully, "Hitler did the same. People do not care if they are ruled by a tyrant who ascended through blood and violence, as long as they can get through their normal life with normality. People are selfish beings down to their very cores..." He took a deep breath, "And very few have the strength of resolve to walk through change and keep their ideals firmly planted. Change is inevitable."

"So we're making the Slytherins better so that they can trust us?" Seamus pointed out.

"We are eight students," Harry began, "To override the Headmaster and to make the whole school peacefully accept the removal of houses, what we need is general consensus. Once that is done, dormitories may be selected devoid of houses classification within the school...as per the initial project." He finished speaking as the two three dimensional towers in the center of the table disappeared, to give way to the four towers separated by the class years. Yellow

numbers ranging from one to seven flew over the towers, with the seven standing next to a golden P and H.

"Prefects and Head boy and girl with the seventh years," Harry mused over, "This was what it was meant to be in the beginning."

"You know Harry? You seem to know an awful lot. I'm pretty sure this isn't written in a history book though." Kevin pointed out.

"The Chamber of Secrets holds a Basilisk as old as the school itself, and Salazar loved to chat with her." Harry deadpanned, "I also do have the diaries of the architect of Hogwarts in Salazar's private shelves." He mused over. "But they're written in parseltongue. The architect was one probably."

"Or maybe Salazar forged them." Hannah pointed out, "Anyway, how are we actually going to clean up the towers?"

"Oh that's the easy part." Harry replied with a light grin, taking his wand out, "The Hard work way. If I'm right, soon enough the Slytherin's parents will try and get their children moved elsewhere. Let it slip tonight at dinner that we intend on restoring the dormitories as they were and that we'll be working on it for the benefit of all the school."

"I can get a couple of Slytherins in it with some bullshit concerning 'getting points for inter house unity' and stuff like that." Draco pointed out.

"Pansy would probably just follow you around like a lost dog anyway." Tracey chuckled, "Why is it that she didn't come with you?"

"None of your business," Draco quickly closed the argument, "Anyway: if there's nothing else, we should adjourn meeting at another date, shouldn't we?"

Harry nodded, standing up together with the rest of the club's men and women.

"So mote it be." The words escaped each of the student's lips at the same time as they stood up, and as their eyes opened up wide in shock they all looked towards Harry.

"I think it's our motto." Harry offhandedly remarked, "Either that, or it's one of the magical effects of the room in question..."

"All right then, I'd have rather had something like 'Let's rule' or 'All hail the King' but it's fine like this." Justin pointed out, "So...next Monday afternoon?"

"Shouldn't we strike the iron while it's hot?" Ginny said, "How about on Friday?"

"Friday's out: I've got training with Snape of all people." Harry sighed, scratching the back of his head, "Wednesday?"

"I've got the flying lessons and afterwards there's Astronomy." Ginny pointed out.

"Uhm..." Draco tilted his head to the side, before suddenly clapping his hands, "You know we do need a professor to legalize the club, and if you're training with Snape..."

"I already have the perfect professor in mind Draco," Harry replied with a toothy grin, "One that isn't the head of any house or biased at all."

"Who? Is it Lockhart perhaps?" Hannah asked repressing a look of disgust, "Please tell me it's not him."

"I'm thinking about Binns." He shrugged back, "He won't worry about what we do, and I'm sure I can get him to accept the club as it is."

"And since he's a ghost he won't be active at all in supervising us." Seamus snickered, "It's perfect."

"Good. Now remember: we are Hogwarts students. Help the first years, act nice around and let's all come up with plans to get the rightful dormitories back into the students' hands before the teachers can act." Harry finished, "Next Monday, same time." With those final words, they trickled out of the room.

Harry had barely taken a few steps outside however that a hand clamped down on his shoulder. He spun around quickly, but the hand merely let go immediately and raised itself in a mock gesture of surrender. Harry's green eyes settled on the red haired face of his

'father' James Potter, the Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher, and Sirius Black, the flying professor.

"Calm down son! Just wanted to talk to you, nice and easy." The man's voice was slow as if he was speaking to a rabid beast, but Harry's right eyebrow merely twitched. Soon the rest of the King's men trickled outside, and with a single glance of dismissal from Harry, they went their own way, leaving him to meddle with his 'father' and his flying professor.

"You are not my father." Harry replied slowly, "What can I do for you, Professor Potter?" He asked coolly, at least trying to sound civil; for a moment, a look of hurt spanned across the man's face, albeit it did last only a second.

"Come on Prongs Juniors: you can't be angry at your dad for something Voldemort did!" Sirius exclaimed, "I mean, it wasn't his fault! You can't think he..."

"Sirius." James said seriously, "It's enough. Really. He's got all the right in the world to be angry."

"But..."

The red haired professor shook his head, before returning to the matter at hand.

"We would like to visit the chamber of secrets, Mr. Scamander," James began, "In case of illegal or dark objects, you must understand, the procedure requires for them to be taken care of and destroyed."

"Good luck with that." Harry snorted back. "Unless you speak my noble tongue, I doubt you'll get as far as the door, and that is if I deem it fun to see you try and open it."

"Harry. It's the law. You can't go above the law." Sirius began, "Really, I understand you think it's cool and all to have a secret hide-out, damn if I and Prongs didn't go to the Shrieking shack during the weekends to drink ourselves silly, but..."

"Private property is private property." Harry replied with his right hand raised. "Unless you hold proof that dark objects are in the chamber, you will have no warrant to look into it."

"It won't take much for the minister to come knocking Harry!" James yelled, "And then I doubt Fudge would even think of letting you keep them! They'll use Veritaserum on you and get the knowledge out! I'm just trying to protect you!"

Harry chuckled briefly. "Just like you did twelve years ago? Tell me...I still don't know where the hell were you when Voldemort came knocking."

James shuddered, before narrowing his eyes.

"Peter Pettigrew called me and Lily urgently to the Order of the Phoenix secret hideout, for a meeting with Albus Dumbledore. During that time...Voldemort attacked. By the time the wards went off, it was already too late. We came back to see a destroyed Wraith-Like Voldemort escaping and your sister with a scar on her hand..." The man whispered. "We don't know how Lillian did it, but she defeated Voldemort that night."

Harry would have wanted to blurt out how wrong the man was in that moment. He would have, if he hadn't just known that in doing so he'd subject himself to an inquisition worse than that of the Church during the witch hunts. Furthermore Dumbledore wouldn't hesitate, if he actually called out all the bluffs.

"And since then you just forgot I existed? Good to know you didn't think too hard about having two set of cribs I suppose or blue and pink clothes of the sort." Harry rolled his eyes, "let the minister come and knock. I will meet them with absolutely nothing. If they seek something, they'll have to fight for it...and I can guarantee you: they won't like it one bit." He smiled, slowly and pretty much sadistically, before turning to leave.

"Power's going to your head!" James yelled at him, "Harry, please, don't do this!"

But Harry kept his march. He wouldn't have much bothered letting the ministry in even then, since the chamber was devoid of everything when in her 'dormant' state, but he first had to get

Heather out of there. If he could get her in the Forbidden Forest, and let her keep the ear plugs...then maybe he could get a portkey out of there? Or maybe...

He could ask Severus to teleport the basilisk some place safe. Maybe in the same place he was meant to go at the end of the year. That could work.

He smiled to himself, nothing was lost.

Neville Longbottom

He had to write to his grandmother urgently. He had to try and get someone from the ministry to Hogwarts fast enough to stop this. He didn't know why he had befriended Harry Scamander, but now he held doubts he even wanted to be in the same room as him. That speech had been all that a Dark Lord would aspire to claim. That way he had spoken easily of overturning a government, of destroying traditions in a fell sweep and wipe all out.

He had never known how scary the power of words could be, because for a single moment, he had relished in the thought of seeing the ministry burn. Then he had remembered his parents, who had practically died after suffering for the only purpose of protecting him from the madness that was Bellatrix Scamander and the Death Eaters with her.

He only had to remember the screams, to realize that the words that Harry spoke were filled with blood, dread, and childish dreams. The worrisome thing was that, for all that his instinct said...it could pretty much come to pass.

Harry was powerful, and he felt it. Harry spoke and people listened, not just walked around or feigned it, but truly listened to him. His eyes glowed with power and his every act seemed staged to perfection. The scribbled letter held all that he wanted his grandmother, Augusta, to know. Practically running, he began his mad dash upwards, to deliver the letter to a school owl. Along the way, another Hufflepuff stopped him for a brief second.

"Neville, have you seen Ernie? We had to study together this afternoon." Susan Bones asked to him, but he merely blurted out a 'No' before continuing his run. He had to be quick.

The clock was ticking.

He didn't know what clock was ticking or even if a clock was ticking, but he knew he was on borrowed time. Just like the rest of the school.

Author's notes

Another chapter's rolled by.

Harry revealed too much in the previous chapter, (Problems of youth, too open-mouthed) and thus he will reap the consequences in the chapters to come. Yes, we can't have a 'boring' 'Ultra-perfect Dark Lord' from second year onward. Things need time.

Like the Basilisk's familiar bond or the Wand or other reveals and so on.

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 16

Classes passed by through murmurs and soft spoken words behind his back, but he did not care about what the others said. Dark Lord and madman were few of the most common appellatives, but it didn't matter: he'd be gone at the end of the year, what need was there to worry about the consequences of his actions? He did feel guilty however. Those who had decided to follow him would probably fare badly with him gone. Still, at the moment, as he looked around the Dark Tower's cells while waving his wand in order to remove the cobwebs, he was strangely feeling happy.

He wasn't alone in cleaning with the wand, as both Tracey Davis and Hannah Abbott had free time that late afternoon of Thursday. The two were actually humming a nice tune, and as they batted away the dust they spoke of the usual things concerning fashion sense and what not. They were currently standing on the second floor of the tower in question, where the first rusted bars of the prison cells stood unhinged and half-broken from the time's uncaring grace.

The rusty bars came unhinged through a small flick of his wand, and as they snapped and creaked away the other two would every now and then get a stack and move them to the corner of the room. Professor Binns was watching over them silently, his ethereal complexion making him hard to see as he stood right in front of a window.

"It is fascinating how much history simply remains unknown." The ghost commented as he began to hover next to Harry, who was in the process of pulling away a particularly resilient bar. "And all that it takes is a chance, to discover it again."

"History shouldn't be written by the victor," Harry mused, "but by the loser." He flicked the wand harshly and the bar came loose, stone crumbling around its foundation.

"Indeed. See how you managed to break the base of the floor? Hogwarts' castle would have already repaired most of it, had it been part of the castle from the beginning. It means that the stone to keep

the bars in place was a later addition." Binns remarked, just as Tracey took that moment to pipe in.

"Hey King, I've got some more people in Slytherin who wish to come over and help out. Think it's fine?"

"Same with Hufflepuff." Hannah piped in, "Some are from older years. They don't want to pass up on the occasion of getting some extra points from our House Head. Madam Sprout is assigning me extra points just because I'm working hard." She flashed a light grin, before scrunching her face up in thought. "There isn't going to be Quidditch this year. And Macmillan is missing since the beginning of the week."

"What?" Harry's question came at the same time as the boy finished dropping the last of the floor's rusty metal bars in the pile. "Who's this Macmillan fellow?"

"A Hufflepuff," Hannah replied, "He was meant to study with Susan but...he's disappeared." Her voice lowered a bit, "You think the murderer got him?"

"I hope not: it's far more probable he got lost somewhere in the castle; always walking around boasting gets to you eventually: maybe Peeves petrified him and dropped him off somewhere." Tracey snickered, "I just hope it's not in the Forbidden Forest, Acromantulas are nasty stuff, and if they got him and the school closes..."

"Let's hope not." Harry concluded, walking closer to where the two girls had been netting away the cobwebs. He tapped with the side of his wand against the stone walls, and within moments soft tapestries began to unwrap from their invisible holding places. A lush carpet of green and silver sprouted from the floor, as a couple of armchairs and a chimney popped up. The prison cells morphed into smaller study rooms, all with doors to keep out the noise and shelves filled with books. Where the books had come from was a mystery however.

"How curious," Binns remarked hovering through the room towards them, "It appears you hold a significant knowledge of the inner workings of the castle, Mr. Scamander." The ghost swiftly flew to the

nearby shelf, letting his head through a book and then humming in surprise. "It appears they come from the library itself."

"It's magic professor," Harry replied with a light shrug, "In the end only Intent matters."

"Don't let professor Flitwick hear you," Hannah chastised him, "Make a wand movement wrong and it will be hell."

"Or the world will split in two and demons will rise from the abyss." Tracey remarked, before adding in a sort of mock imitation of Flitwick's voice, "And young lady, there are Charms and there are Charms, move that wrist! Hop-hop!"

"Should I point out that I am still a professor of the faculty, and that I am, indeed, present and perfectly capable of hearing you?" Binns queried monotonously, shaking his head slowly. "That will be five points from Hogwarts."

"But Hogwarts isn't a cl..." Hannah began, only to close her mouth shut as a light smirk appeared on her face. "Understood professor." The girl nodded, before plopping down on one of the armchairs.

"They're comfy! I wonder when we'll get the Hufflepuff tower up and running: if the others don't want to go it's fine, more space for the others!"

"Or we could turn it into our headquarters when we grow in size." Tracey remarked drily. At the gazes of perplexity from both the Hufflepuff and the Ravenclaw, the Slytherin sighed.

"Come on! You aren't expecting the club will be of only eight people, right? The others will come around the moment we begin churning out successes, and we will need a bigger place. Think about it: we could have banners, and flags, and a hymn and we could start an army..." As the girl happily lost herself in dreams of glory, Harry rolled his eyes, before chuckling gently.

"Take things easy Tracey: we should leave building up an army for the sixth or seventh year you know? Better to just clean up the school a bit and help the new students every year." Harry pointed out. "And it's not my intention to build an army: there's no need to resort to violence to drive home a point."

"Violence is always the solution to the world's problems though." Tracey mumbled back, only for Harry to sigh and shake his head.

"With a kind word and a gun, you can have far more than with just a kind word." Harry retorted. "One needs not an army to prove his point. It needs something that the others perceive as strength. I don't go around flaunting I took down a troll, do I?"

"You took down a troll?" Hannah blinked in surprise, as well as Tracey, who jerked her head back up from her moping position.

"When the hell did you do that!?" The Slytherin exclaimed. "Are you talking about last year? Wasn't that the work of your sister?"

"I actually let the rumor mill go about it," Harry sighed, before suddenly widening his eyes. "Wait. How do you know Lillian's my sister?"

"Rumor mill." Tracey replied with a small grin, "And it's was all over the Daily Prophet actually...you don't read the newspaper?"

Harry bit his lower lip. He had to admit it: he did not read newspapers. It was hardly his fault; he knew what newspapers were from his father, and Vernon always read those horrendously boring all facts no bullshit ones that really, were no fun for a child to read. It had stuck to him through time, and in the end he had simply stopped trying to read one.

"No." He replied meekly. Tracey looked at him worriedly for a moment, before stretching on the comfortable armchair that, she had probably mentally decided, would be hers when she 'transferred' from the dungeon to the tower.

"You know, I'm starting to understand what Draco meant." The Slytherin whispered, "Every now and then...you just act different. I mean," she hastily added as she probably saw him puzzled, "you go from raving Dark Lord to be to kid like us in less than a few hours. You were muggle-raised right? It's expected of the pure-bloods to know all about etiquette and all, so they're usually sticks in the mud...but you just settle from one to the other."

"Oh." He mumbled back as a reply. Was that really the truth? He didn't feel as if he was acting any different. He just felt himself all of the time. No. That was a lie. A lie he told himself to feel better. He knew there was something wrong within him, but he just had no idea what to do about it. Asking any of those at Hogwarts for help would be...wrong. They'd send him off. He knew it. If only the whispers would subside...he had been an idiot to give them out!

The only thing that worried him was that the Headmaster hadn't called him to his office. If anything the old man hadn't even been present at school since his revelation, and that...that didn't make him feel comfortable. But maybe it would all roll over him with little trouble, and everything would be fine.

"Harry!" A voice called for him as he blinked his eyes open. He must have fallen asleep on the armchair near the fire, as Hannah had apparently been calling him for a while now. "Our proud King is tired I suppose." The Hufflepuff chuckled. "We're going to be late for dinner." She added.

Harry merely nodded, as he stood up from the chair and stretched before following the other two girls down. As he walked carefully across the Hogwarts courtyard, his eyes trailed off to where Hagrid's hut was. It had been a while since he had seen the half-giant actually: rumors were he had ended up in Azkaban for being the potential cause of the Murderer, that some deemed being a giant and cunning Acromantula. Somehow, the thought of having petrified Lillian and having removed her from the school made him feel slightly better. He at least wouldn't have to worry about her. He kind of wondered, though, if perhaps she would have been a part of his club or not had she been there.

He didn't miss her of course. He hardly would miss anyone...except Heather, and the ghosts, and the portraits. Well...he just hoped the place he'd end up would be better than this. It was as he trudged through the entryway of the castle that he realized that professor Potter was standing in front of the architect statue, his arms crossed in front of his chest. Next to him stood a young woman with bright pink hair and clad in Auror robes, while on the other side stood a grumpy old man with a glass eye that twirled around, who apparently was hunched over and with a wooden leg.

"There he is." James Potter said, gesturing at him. "Tonks, Moody: meet Mr. Scamander," the man spoke drily, "The Heir of Salazar Slytherin."

The woman, Tonks, whistled as if she was appreciating something, before displaying a toothy grin.

"Here I was thinking he would be some sort of evil, evil boy all like that evil house elf of Kreacher. Instead look at him: he resembles you a great deal James."

"Constant Vigilance Nymphadora!" Moody barked to the girl, who looked both equally sour and angry at the other man for some reason. "You never know! Well then, Mr. Scamander. We have permission from the Headmaster to warrant a search through the school and its grounds for dark artifacts. You'd mind showing us the chamber of secrets?" The question wasn't as much a question as it was an order, and as the very official looking paper signed by Dumbledore and the Ministry dictated, he indeed had to show them the chamber of secrets.

"Do I get a lawyer?" He asked back immediately.

"Afraid not," Moody grinned, "We're not in the muggle world. Now let's do this nice and easy. Don't let me take out the rooster...I heard of your pet, Mr. Scamander...and while it's unlawful to keep one, apparently the loophole your Headmaster claims is that its nest is within the chamber...which makes it unlawful to move it since it might awaken from his slumber and be potentially more dangerous." Harry raised an eyebrow.

He wasn't making any sense of half the things the man was spewing, but he clenched his fists and began a slow walk. Apparently Tracey and Hannah had forgotten all about dinner, since they rushed away immediately. He just hoped they wouldn't go and make things worse. He was sure there was nothing incriminating, and as long as he didn't speak in parseltongue except for opening the door, there wouldn't be a problem. Moody didn't appear to really have a rooster, but even if he did, Heather had the earmuffs tightly on.

Until he found a better way to make her immune to the rooster's crow that is.

Lily Potter

She was nervous. She had been the last one to see the boy, Macmillan, and he had just looked so...scared. If only she had stopped him, then he wouldn't have disappeared at all. There was more however, something far more sinister that had, luckily, been hidden from the other students.

"He lies dead within the bowels of the beast of Salazar. Claimed by the evil that is its unworthy descendant!" That had been written in blood within the walls of the castle's entryway on Tuesday. Due to luck, Filch had been the one to find it and to erase it quickly. Dumbledore had been uncannily nervous and agitated following those words, and had ordered the few who knew to keep quiet about it.

She didn't want to believe the words of the wall of course. She didn't want to think even for a second that Harry, her son, could have actually killed anyone. Yet those words spoken in the hall, those words spoken in front of the statue...Harry was worse than a Dark Lord in the making, he was already well on the road to become one.

It wasn't power and curses that made Dark Lords. It wasn't cunningness or even some sort of predestined thing. It was the complete disrespect for laws and the belief that power made everything right and correct. It was the flawed concept that laws were meaningless and that the ministry was wrong and should be destroyed that made a Dark Lord such.

She shivered at the thought. He was just a child, twelve years old. He shouldn't be saddled with the power of being Salazar's heir. He shouldn't possess the access to the chamber of secrets, but even worse...if he was a parseltongue, if he could command the snake...then was Lillian one too?

She brought her hands to clench the stiff and still one of her daughter, petrified in a look that betrayed utter fear for something. Damn Peeves and his stupid jokes, to petrify Lillian like that! She'd risk losing a year if things went that way, and she had little doubt that she would need supplemental lessons to catch up. The only ray of happiness was the sight every now and then of Lillian's friend, Hermione. She came by a lot, stopping over to visit the young girl and talking to her about the recent events at school.

The muggle-born witch had received permission from the Headmaster, who had considered it a well-deserved privilege for her high grades. The fact that apparently the girl wished to become a healer in the future just made it all the more easier. Lily shook her head slowly, she was worrying for nothing. Her son was not a murderer. He was not going to become a Dark Lord and he most certainly would not remain long in the hands of that guardian of his.

It wasn't a mother's delusion. No son of hers would ever go Dark. If only Dumbledore were to hasten the process to get him back...in some way.

Harry Scamander

"Satisfied?" Harry's question did hold a hint of smugness actually. The entire chamber was nothing more than a long stone bridge filled with water and stone faces of Slytherin. The water, furthermore, did not shrink under the effect of spells nor did it grant them passage beneath. For all they knew, the chamber held only statues and water.

After three hours of trying various things, none the less a probable Legilimency on his person, the auror captain, Alastor Moody, had no choice but to call it off and leave through the slimy tunnel they had taken to get down from the second floor's bathroom. He was actually grinning to himself and doing his best to avoid it from showing, but it was hard. Heather hadn't thankfully made a noise, and because of that he hoped everything was fine with her.

He'd check on her later on. At the moment, he had something more pressing to do. He had barely taken a step out of the bathroom, however, when he heard a sharp yell.

"Harry!" He turned around to stare at the worried look of Draco, who was reaching for him with baited breath. "Everything's all right?!" The boy asked quickly, before eying with narrow eyes the two aurors and the DADA professor.

"Yes, everything's fine Draco." He replied quickly, "There was nothing after all in the chamber." He added with maybe a bit more of mirth than usual. "Nothing but old nosy men." He nodded to himself at the end of his words, the smile never leaving his face.

"Mr. Scamander, we can still hear you." James Potter muttered with his hands clenched in frustration as his eyes narrowed on the boy.

"Then, next time, learn your place and stop trying to ruin my life." He snarled back, anger flaring as he took a step forward.

James Potter

James took a deep breath at his son's words. He knew better than to lash out, but from what he heard...he didn't know what to do. Was the boy really thinking he was out for his blood? The thought alone was horrendous. He was trying to look after him. Many dark artifacts had a mind of their own, and many more if used improperly could lead to the death of the user. He didn't even want to speak about the even darker ones that could suck out souls and destroy cities.

He knew his son was just misguided. He knew it was just the normal rambling of an angered teenager who believed to always be right and never wrong. He knew he had to be the one to bring reason to the argument, but Harry refused to listen to him.

The boy snarled and then turned around to leave, without even giving him the time to explain properly why he had asked two people he trusted implicitly with this. Harry could pretty much risk being sent to Azkaban for this!

"Where do you think you're going, Scamander!?" James hissed. "Twenty-five points from Ravenclaw! Detention with m..." And then, calmly, Harry turned around and raised an eyebrow.

"You don't want to go down the deep road, Potter." He snarled, "Trust me that within Hogwarts nothing and no-one is above me. If you dare think yourself better than me, then know your place now, before I decide to make it known...thirty points to Ravenclaw. Detention removed."

Then Harry smiled, a sick and twisted smile that shouldn't belong on the face of any twelve years old, and the boy began walking away again, with Draco following a little bit behind but glancing back every now and then. This time, however, James' eyes caught the sight of a slight trail of smoke descending from the boy's right wrist. The man inhaled sharply, his eyes bugging out as he quickly took his wand out...but Moody's hand stopped him from launching a stunner. He

would have only stunned the boy and then have him exorcised: it would have...it would have worked.

"I saw that too Potter." Alastor muttered in a low voice, "My eye sees, but remember that each possession is different. You could have done more harm than good. Let him go for now. Try and get more information out of him some way that doesn't involve angering him...and keep being constantly vigilant! I'll talk with some Unspeakables. Might have a suggestion or two..." The old auror flashed him a grin, before turning around to wobble away.

James Potter remained in the corridor quietly until, seething in rage he punched with his right hand against the stone wall next to him. He howled slightly in pain, moving his hand and opening and closing it from the sheer excruciating feeling he felt. The man took a deep calming breath, before walking off. He'd have his hand looked at by Lily, but till then he first had to check something else.

If the points of the Ravenclaw had resettled themselves...then whoever possessed his son was far more dangerous than ever. He dreaded coming to that conclusion, but it was the only one possible after all.

Lord Voldemort had found a way to possess his son.

Harry Scamander

He needed help.

Professional help, the good type, the one that helped you get out of the madmen's house and back into the society of the living. He knew something was wrong, and with Draco following him he understood it even better. He clicked every now and then, like a sort of bizarre Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hide. The added stress of the situation didn't help him the least, but what could he do? Go and plead to the nurse for help, and hope Madam Pomfrey was available instead of his 'mother'? Go and ask Dumbledore of all people?

Oh, he knew what he could do. The problem was actually doing it. He could run away on his own. Away from all this bullshit and idiocy that went around rampantly. He could reach the States. He could go to Europe, Russia or Australia. He could go anywhere. Well, within the limits of his finances. Still, he didn't. He didn't even know how to

buy a ticket at the airport, how was he even going to board a plane? Or a ship...He was already feeling sea-sick at the thought.

"Harry." Draco's voice buzzed straight through his stray thoughts, "Harry?"

"I'm not feeling well, Draco." Harry muttered back.

"My aunt..." The blond haired boy began slowly, looking around and narrowing his eyes at something. "Not here. I'll write to father and...he'll get you something. He had the same problem." With those words whispered, Harry's eyes bulged. It couldn't be. He looked at Draco with surprise, and the boy looked back at him with an awry smile.

"Draco...I..."

"No need to thank me. We're cousins so we're practically family now!" The boy exclaimed, "And...well, I'll ask my godfather too. How's the tower proceeding by the way? Professor Snape is running a bit of interference, so we can complete it before the other professors can butt in: we'll be getting most of the credit by the time they start officially working on it."

Harry nodded slowly, smiling hesitantly as Draco and him exchanged small talk until they reached the dining hall. Once there, he bid goodbye to his cousin to head over to the Ravenclaw table to sit down, feeling far more exhausted than ever.

"You sure you're not falling down with Dragon Pox?" Basileus suddenly asked from his right. "You don't look so good."

"I've felt better." He mumbled back, "Keeping up a club is more difficult than it seems, you know?"

"Of course I know." The older teen rolled his eyes, "You think the study group for Owls and Newts sprouted out from nowhere? We were a study group in the beginning, but now we're the 'New Owls' corps: devoted to the extermination of exams for the glory of the O-mark." The red haired boy chuckled, as near him the other older boys and girls joined in with smiles and winks.

"That said, enough of the chit-chat. Dig in." Harry didn't need to be told again.

Had he stopped and looked around, he would have realized that neither his 'father' or his 'mother' or even the Headmaster were present.

"The Dueling club starts on the seventeen of December." Basileus remarked, "A useless waste of time."

"Hear, hear! Of course you'd dislike the dueling club: you're rubbish at practical spell-work." Penelope replied with a smug grin, only for Basileus to childishly stick out his tongue at her for a moment.

"You're just jealous of my wonderful hair." He replied with a wink and a slightly higher pitch, "Afraid your little Weasel might like me better, hun?" As the boy also moved his right hand across his hair, to increase the 'feminine' effect, Penelope's face soured.

"He got you." Another boy, a sixth year, nodded sagely.

"Why do you think it's useless?" Harry asked curiously. The boy stopped his friendly banter to reply, gesturing for him to move his face closer as he whispered it like it was some sort of important secret.

"Lockhart's a fraud: he's got the timetables all wrong within his books. And the spells he uses? They don't exist. As a muggle studies professor he might even be good, but I doubt he's much else." Basileus rolled his eyes, "I think any sixth year could get the drop on him actually."

Chastised by the words, Harry grumbled in silence. It was then that a strange thought circulated in his mind...when was the last time he had trained with the Bloody Baron or Helena actually? He scrunched his face up trying to remember, but he came up empty. No, the Baron had trained him once, right? At least more than once. Yeah. Now he remembered. Strange how it had slipped his mind.

It was by the end of November, that things changed.

Severus Snape

This was sheer idiocy. He was a lunatic for even thinking about doing this. Yet what choice did he have? He knew all too well that Obliviates did not work on the Scamander. How was a mystery, but the children had managed to shrug them off, all of them. The boy could not have his mind erased any longer, and so he had found himself cornered and forced to admit that indeed, he and his associate just wanted him free.

The boy hadn't asked why. He hadn't even asked who his associate was or what they wanted to do with him. He had just asked for a favor in exchange of compliance. It was on one side a completely Slytherin thing to do, but on the other a fool's way to death. One should always at least question other's intentions...not accept a blind deal. Unless he was really far more desperate than usual.

It still didn't diminish the fact that smuggling a one thousand years old Basilisk to Durmstrang was an idiocy. The best he could do was put the beast somewhere safe for the time being. The Prince manor, for one, was big and empty and devoid of life in a good enough surrounding area. It would be a fine place to put the beast, as long as they managed to get through the Forbidden forest alive of course.

Severus stood silent, his heavy winter robes covering him as a warming charm protected him from the harshest of winds. Near the lake, that had frozen from the cold and upon which small mounds of snow were already depositing, the potion master stood in wait near a normal looking hill of dirt upon which an eerily frozen yellow flower stood as a sort of sign.

The next moment, the dirt mount broke apart, as a circular hole big enough to let a man pass through cracked open. The hissing noise grew stronger, and within mere seconds two giant yellow orbs stared at him. He gulped down nervously. He was grateful he was still alive, because it meant that Harry's words were actually true concerning the 'death gaze' of the basilisk. He did get a slightly pulsing headache though, but it was better than being petrified or killed. Slowly, from the distended neck of the giant snake, Harry slid down on the cold snowy ground. Tonight would be the right night.

Ron Weasley

He had chickened out. Of course he hadn't wanted to go alone, never mind the invisible cloak. Still, he had taken to walk out of the

dormitory by night, always reaching till the entryway of Hogwarts but never going further down. It was during his nightly nocturnal walks that he realized that Harry Scamander slipped out from his dormitory at night.

The Ravenclaw and the Gryffindor towers shared a corridor midlevel, one that needed to be traversed to access the lower levels closer to the exit and the second floor bathrooms. In the end, armed with his invisible cloak, Ron had gathered enough courage to follow the boy through the bathroom and see him enter a hole where once a sink had stood. That had to be the entrance of the chamber of secrets.

He had resisted the urge to enter though. The dark nightmarish hisses he heard from the bowels of the tunnel were enough to make him shiver and have his skin run cold with goose bumps.

Finally, with November drawing to an end and Ernest Macmillan deemed killed and his body hidden by the murderer, the Ministry finally decided on the school's destiny.

It would close down at the start of the winter vacations, unless the culprit was found. It was with that notice that Aurors had been stationed around the school, and now...now he knew that the destiny of the school rested into his hands.

He had to find the culprit before it could kill again. He had to find him and bring him to justice. So, as the last hour of midnight gave way to the first day of December, Ronald Weasley gathered the courage to walk outside the castle and into the Forbidden Forest. To ask the spiders for answers.

Like a brave Gryffindor. Still...what was that movement by the lake?

Tom Riddle

They were smuggling the basilisk out! How dared they! How dared they do that! The Basilisk was his creature, his weapon, his own! It was enough. He'd have to use her. It didn't matter what her utility would be by keeping her alive. She was needed as his legs and eyes...

And so he made her move.

They had a heist to stop...after all, everyone always believed the cute little girl with bright sparkling eyes, and not the dark lord to be with a Basilisk in tow.

Author's notes

Another chapter. We're nearing the 'climax'.

Yes, the Climax will be halfway through the year actually, and not towards the end of the year. (That is because firstly, in the canon the 'climax' was the Basilisk and the Diary growing bolder, here it's a completely different topic that's important. Secondly...well, things will happen on Christmas too.)

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 17

The cold wind hit with the same strength as if a freezing block of ice had been plastered on his face. The potion's master's eyes were looking at him and at Heather with a slight uncontrolled expression. One of shock, he'd wager. Heather was looking around with curiosity, before slowly lowering her head down to the ground level. In a deliberate manner, the giant one thousand year old snake slithered its way under Harry's robes, as if the size did not matter. The horrendous earmuffs still tightly tied to her head. A bit of magic and a pair of unused pillows had done the rest to create them, and unluckily purple was the only color available. Still, Harry deemed it his best invention to date...also because it was his only one.

"Interesting," escaped from the lips of the potions' master as Harry eeped through clenched teeth at the cold and slimy sensation of having the Basilisk coil around him...from within his robes. Apparently the Basilisk could travel through pipes by subconsciously shrinking herself, if she so willed. Every snake subjected to even a bit of magic could do that, and that was how Heather could slither through pipes and drainage at Hogwarts without troubles...or up one of his robe's sleeves.

"It's...It's..." Harry did not say what was going on in his head, but if he had to make a comparison, it was just like what Ian Solo felt in the garbage compactor when that monster slithered its way around. Only Harry was actually travelling with a giant basilisk shrunken within his robes. The problem was he couldn't make his discomfort know...Heather was very sensible when it came to her physique. Which was complete rubbish considering she was a snake and not a human being, but maybe it was something ingrained in any and all females regardless of the specie they belonged to.

"Enough chatting," Severus whispered. "Let's move. Remember your cover." Then the professor straightened up and began to walk briskly while setting the pace towards the Forbidden Forest. Harry was right next to him, trying to keep his eyes open, albeit the sheer intensity of the wind made it difficult. He was narrowing his eyes to prevent the snow from getting inside when a movement caught his attention. A man clad in Auror robes was making his way near them, having probably spotted them.

"Ohi! Stop and identify yourself!" The voice bellowed, only for the potions' master to retort.

"Kingsley." Severus snapped back, "You can resume freezing stiff in the forest. I'm bringing a student of mine into the Forbidden Forest to gather some stuff: next time around he'll learn not to miss homework."

"Severus, you're my ray of sunshine you know? Just what I needed for this wonderful day." The man spat back, coming finally into view. He had dark skin and was apparently bald, and albeit his clothes stood in a strange purple hue while resembling curtains, he didn't appear to be freezing. "Move along then...you did cast a warming charm on the poor boy, didn't you?"

"Of course I did Kingsley." Severus replied curtly, before pulling Harry along by the arm. The boy followed in silence, giving just one last glance at the dark skinned man who sent his way a small awkward smile of encouragement. Probably being out and about at one am in the morning was normal when gathering ingredients for potions. Some did react better when harvested in different hours after all.

"He didn't seem fazed at all." Harry muttered. "I thought it would be harder."

"Hogwarts is safer than most schools." Severus began before biting his lips; "At least, it was years ago. Now it's best to just consider it a school like the others." The man shook his head slightly, "The real reason is because he knows I'm usually Dumbledore's man. So he's thinking I'm doing this for the old man." He whispered, flicking his wand. "Mufflatio will ensure no-one will be able to hear us as we walk." He added carefully.

"Neat." Harry said with a bit of a smile forming on his lips. "But what if he goes back and asks Dumbledore?"

"Albus will say it's all going as planned, as he needs me to get into your good graces in order to spy on you for him." Snape retorted, "And since you are immune to all Legilimency, and also Obliviates, there's no problem in telling you this..." The man sighed. "You aren't going to ask?"

"Nope." Harry smiled as he said that, "I know you want me to, but I won't. It's your secret to keep."

"Secrets are powerful things, Harry. Are you really sure you don't want to know why I'm helping you?"

He shrugged.

"Could be anything from remorse to vengeance; as long as I get away from here, does it matter?"

"It should." Severus growled lightly, "That it doesn't shows a lot about your situation."

"The less I know the less I'll get burned I suppose." Harry muttered back, taking a deep breath in of the cold air, before moving his right hand to swat away some frozen snow from his forehead. It was rather than snow actually sleet, but it still bothered him nevertheless. The boy's robes billowed slightly at the increasing winds, before settling a few moments later. The sound of his teeth clacking one against the other was probably the only thing that he could hear by himself.

Their walk took them minutes, but to him it seemed more as if hours had passed by. The wards proceeded all the way till the edges of the Forbidden Forest that gave away to the green luscious grounds of Scotland's grassy plains, and as such they had to traverse the forest by foot. The walk should have been easy, albeit a bit wobbly. Severus' light from the wand kept at bay some of the most dangerous creatures that lurked in the darkness, but at the same time it attracted more.

The sound of a low snarl was the first signal that something was going to go wrong. Soon, the barking sounds of a horde of dogs echoed near them, and as Severus muttered curses beneath his breath, with small white clouds billowing from his mouth, a giant Cerberus emerged from the side of the trees crashing through them.

"Custos?" Harry mumbled, staring at the three headed dog that was far, far bigger than Custos back at home. "Cerberus? What's a Cerberus doing here of all places!?" His wand was out at the same as that of his professor.

"The Headmaster probably freed him in the forest to make sure nobody went further through. There are the Acromantulas grounds after this, as well as trolls and worse...but we do need to pass." The Cerberus was barking hard at them, but wasn't taking a step forward.

"How ironic." Severus mused out, "That just as Hades' Cerberus would hold the souls of the dead forever back in the underworld so too would Hogwarts have a Cerberus to do the same." Harry gritted his teeth. There had to be something he could do, right? Fighting three headed dogs wasn't something...his wand felt warm. It was a good type of warm. If only he'd let all of his worries slid by and...no. He wasn't going to let his psychopathic second personality kill. Even if it was a creature, a potentially murderous one, he wasn't going to...there had to be a middle ground.

There had to be a way...

"How is the beast bound?" He asked coarsely, his eyes scanning his surroundings, "Where's the beast's leash and its collar?"

Severus' reply came quickly.

"It's probably in Dumbledore's hands, as for the collar...you're actually right: he's got one on the central head."

The dog's fur was mangy and riddled with spots that had been carved open in that spot. Coarse iron hooks hanged loosely, tied together by steel chains that dripped water mixed with blood. The collar wasn't made to be something painless to wear, and apparently whatever tied the creature required it to bleed. Now that Harry knew the beast wouldn't outright attack, he looked at it better. The creature's barks stopped after a few minutes, and as it warily stared at them, he looked back.

"Can we remove the collar?" Harry whispered.

"It's blood magic, Harry." Severus retorted, "The only way would be to sever his head...I cannot guarantee that he will live. There are very few Cerberus remaining, and while Hagrid's own Fluffy," the Cerberus barked in that moment.

Severus blinked.

"Fluffy?" He asked hesitantly, getting another bark from the three headed dog.

"The dog's name is fluffy?" Harry muttered in disbelief, before looking straight at the dog. He was now wagging his tail, in some sort of cuddly way that...no. He had to remain on the road of normality, at the very least he had to steer clear from the 'Hagrid's' route of considering extremely dangerous animals as fluffy and cute. He had to remain convinced of the dangers said creatures posed.

Still...the Basilisk was deemed an irremediable threat to be eliminated, yet Heather was as nice as a one thousand year old magical snake that kills with his sight can be, and if the Cerberus shared the same ideal...then maybe there was a way to free him. The question was how.

"Professor...do you know about the Switching charm?" Harry asked carefully, looking over at the collar of the dog and then around, "Do you think it would be possible to..."

"Dumbledore would have certainly thought about that. Tampering with the collar will undoubtedly lead to the beast's death." The man remarked carefully.

Harry sighed, kicking a stone nearby. If only there was a way to remove the collar...and then what? Have the dog brought back to school? There wouldn't be an excuse for it. No, Fluffy had to be distracted. Maybe slamming him against the trees...there was just no way to pass without resorting to violence. A pity, because Cerberus dogs were extremely loyal to the owner they saw when their central head grew.

He blinked.

"Professor...don't Cerberus' heads grow back?" He asked carefully.

"They do, but we might kill the dog by cutting all three down: the collar would probably warn Dumbledore if the beast died." 'Fluffy' barked at the appellative, growling lightly towards the Potions' master. "I know the...creature can be put asleep with music, Harry. We'll just have to do this on another night, when we'll have an instrument to play to get through."

Harry's eyes went once more to the collar. He couldn't remove it without hurting the dog. He knew it, yet...what was better? To leave him there, or to...He concentrated. His wand moved before he could be stopped, even though the man next to him tried to get his attention. The right hand moved on its own, trailing an arc in front of him as magic answered his call.

"Trunco!" The arc appeared through the air as crystallized air that flung itself forward like a moon-crescent shaped cleaver, carving through the flesh of the beasts' neck as if made of butter. Dif-fin-do was the weaker version of the war spell Trun-co. They both meant to cleave, but whereas Trunco meant to lop off and to chop, Diffindo meant more of the word split.

"Do you know what Heracles last fatigue was? To capture a Cerberus alive. The beast is always depicted with three heads when the half-god enters the underworld, but as it leaves only two are displayed. Do you know why?"

Harry blinked. Severus was snarling at him, but it wasn't as if it mattered. He was covered in blood from head to toe, having spurted from the creature's now missing central head. The blood felt warm, and sticky. It was strange...who would have thought a creature held so much blood inside? The troll didn't have that much, did it?

He began to chuckle and laugh out loud to himself, as the heavy hooked collar of the beast lay on the ground, still attached to the decapitated head of the beast. The other two heads whined painfully as they stumbled around, before the legs of the Cerberus fell on the ground. The dog's whimpers and sobs echoed through the forest, and as the creature stood there, suddenly meek and docile, Harry took a step forward.

He took another as he no longer cared if the potions' master was watching or not. At his third step, the two heads of the beast rose, their four eyes gazing at him with glazed eyes. The boy smiled, before beckoning the beast's heads closer. The two neared and as they did that, slowly but deliberately Harry let them smell him, and finally with a low growl of acceptance, the beast stood back up.

Rather than calling this something mystical, it was far more obvious that the beast would smell the familiar blood and hormones of the

third head, and would thus follow the one bathed in it. It was a normal thing to know, at least in the past, when Cerberus dogs were still high in numbers and worldwide known were the methods of dealing with them. The snow kept descending together with frozen water, but Harry did not mind.

He merely turned around to look at the slack-jawed face of the potions' master, before raising an eyebrow and gesturing for the road ahead of them.

"Shouldn't we be going?" He asked the boy in front of him.

"Th...Yes." The man recomposed himself, quickly scampering to take the lead once more. Well, with a Cerberus following them, he highly doubted any other beast would try and stop them...He gently brought his right hand inside his robes, to make sure Heather hadn't suffered from the blood or grown nervous. He could feel the head of the snake tense slightly at his hand touching her, but then relaxing when he simply rubbed her neck as always. The creature appeased, they kept on their march.

Ron Weasley

His mouth stood open in shock as his entire body stood still, his heart beating so hard he thought for a single dreadful filled moment that they had seen him or heard him. The wind was strong and the weather cold, but the invisibility cloak while not keeping him warm kept him hidden at least; hidden from that monster in human skin that was walking caked in blood and laughing out of it...hidden from that beast. He knew it. He knew it had to have been him.

Was he heading off to dispose of the body then? Had he killed Ernest and forced Hogwarts to close? Him and Snape, the worst Slytherin and evil git that the world had ever seen...of course the boy had to have been working together with someone else. He had been a stupid not to see it! He had to turn back now and warn the professors!

He stopped. Ron Weasley stopped from doing it for a simple reason. The last time he had warned a professor, he had been together with the girl who lived and Hermione. Even though one was praised as the smartest witch and the other as the savior of the wizardry world, even then it hadn't been enough to convince their own head of the

house that someone was trying to steal the Philosopher's stone. No, he decided. If he went back there and then, then all proofs, all traces, would be erased. He had to follow them.

He had to follow them until they reached the very end of the forest, and then, only then, he would confront them. He could probably down the Potions' master with a well-placed spell, of that he was sure. So as he began to walk, wrapped in the invisibility cloak that belonged to Lillian, he gritted his teeth. The cloak did make him invisible to the naked eye, but it didn't do much else. The rain drizzling down on him was a clue to it. He should have gone out warmer, but with his second hand robes...it was enough to even be covered some times.

The two had the Cerberus following them meekly behind, as if Fluffy had done a complete overhaul of his habits...Ron shivered. He remembered when he had braved together with Lillian and Hermione the three headed dog: had they known all that it took was beheading him...

No, even knowing that there was such a gruesome way they would have found another mean to pass by the dog. They wouldn't have gone for the quick and brutal route that Harry Scamander apparently enjoyed taking. The boy was bonkers or even worse: completely mad like his 'mother'. Of course the apple couldn't fall that far away from the tree, could it?

The Gryffindor sighed as he took yet another step, following as fast as he could behind the others. Maybe he should keep his wand at hand, but with the wind that blew holding onto the cloak with only one limb risked him losing his only cover from the psychopathic murderer. He was sad for Lillian though...her brother was a murderer, a psychopath and a Death Eater to be probably; all the fault of that Bellatrix Scamander and probably her Death Eaters friends.

Suddenly, the ground gave way beneath him as his foot pressed itself against a seemingly white thread that was hanging loosely from the root of a tree. The next moment he was in the air screaming from the shock. As his vision blurred from the speed of having ended up upside down and hanging from a thread of webs, he began to move his hands as fast as he could to hold onto the robe that was dangerously slipping down.

"Friend of yours, Harry?" The professor asked with a low hiss, as he turned to speak to the boy as if he was his equal, and not his student. It was strange. The professor and Head of the Slytherin treated all with disdain and hatred, and bare contempt was the most those of his own house would have...but with Harry? He acted even a bit warm to say the least: handing over points like they were candies to him, and treating him well enough to warrant the question if by chance the two were actually related in some way.

"Weasley. For how long must you seek to test my patience, arrogant spawn of idiocy and inbreeding?" Harry's voice cut in harshly, but he didn't feel angry, no...he felt completely afraid. Why was it that every time the two of them met he ended up being the one placed worse? Why couldn't he be the one holding a wand to the face of Harry, to just change a bit the usual outcome.

"Let me go you mad bonkers! You're both Death Eaters scums of the earth!" The red haired teen bellowed, as he tried desperately to make the spider thread drop him...it was then that he realized that more spiders were coming down on him from the threads that now surrounded him. Ron screamed, he screamed as spiders as big as dogs started to spin him around and close him in a cocoon of webbings. Then, mercifully, he blacked out.

Salazar Slytherin

Of course the pathetic foul of a boy had to alert the Acromantulas. Whoever had brought that vile spawn upon his grounds would soon learn the true meaning of pain, once he got his Basilisk to safety of course. The degrading nature of the thing was that these spiders were half-breeds. There had to be but one Acromantula, surrounded by its spawns gathered by breeding with the forest's spiders. Those creatures furthermore weren't even of the Celtic sub-variety, since they lacked the strong leather-like hide that made the spiders impervious to the lower levels of magic.

These...these pests and vermin were something loathsome and far too easy to defeat, had he a wish for pointless waste of slaughter. He turned an eyebrow to the man who was following him, and then chuckled grimly.

"I hope your Obliviate spells are up to notch, Severus...that," pointing his wand to the Weasley cocoon, "Will have to be corrected."

"Shouldn't be difficult," The man replied as his wand began to cast a wordless Incendio. Harry rolled his eyes in boredom, waving his wand in the Trunco spell to cut down the stupid redhead. He walked closer as the spiders scuttled away, no doubt going to gather reinforcements. Fluffy hadn't moved an inch, but he knew better than to expect the dog from acting. Without the central head, all that the dog could do was to follow the one who had bathed in its blood, and holding no present, all it could do was be meek and passive to the world itself.

His hand shot downward as he grabbed the invisibility cloak the teen seemed so fond of. He stilled as his hands went through the fabric of the...uhm...a nice amount of interesting. It clearly was a prized possession. Well, the Weasley would learn not to meddle with him ever again. He held the cloak and folded it, pushing it within his inner pocket that already contained the Bezoar stone of the year before. He stepped backwards, letting Severus do his work of obliterating the red haired boy's mind.

"Good. We can keep moving." Harry whispered, as Severus growlingly gestured to the fallen boy.

"We need to get him to safety."

"Leave him there, with the magic flung around I'm sure someone will pass by eventually. If they ask: horde of Acromantulas." Severus nodded, standing up and striding all the way forward past Harry and beyond, with the boy in tow trying to keep the march.

"We only need to pass the Centaurs now," Severus whispered, "If we could do that without attracting their attention, it would actually be better: they do report to Albus every now and then."

"Luckily they have no magic." Harry retorted, "Notice-me-not charms would do the trick I suppose." The boy mused over, "Although we could try and subdue them. We are pretty much doing a bout of ruckus around here." The dark haired boy sighed, before shaking his head slowly. "Let's just go and hope nothing more decides to come after us."

How wrong had he been to believe in something as fickle as hope.

Albus Dumbledore

The alarms in his office had been blaring for at least five minutes, by the time he had prepared himself for the Forbidden forest. Someone had been foolish enough to leave the castle in the middle of the night, and whoever he or she was, he had also powerfully bypassed the Cerberus he had leashed to protect the inner grounds of the forest. Sure, the Blood Collar was a gruesome method to elicit specific control over a magical beast, but it had been the only way to guarantee no-one would be able to pass through and reach deeper within the forest.

He was already halfway through the corridors, when Minerva's Patronus reached him.

"Albus, where are you!? A student's missing from the Gryffindors!"

His blood ran cold. Could it be? Could the murderer have been within the house of Godric, of the brave? Could the murderer have committed said foul treachery while belonging into the house of red and gold? He couldn't believe that. He wouldn't believe that: he'd look and he'd make sure of it.

His own Patronus was sent back, in its silvery form, towards Minerva, instructing her on waking up the faculty and having a head count of the Gryffindors to find out who, actually, was missing. There were wards that every now and then counted the number of heads within the common rooms of the school. During the night, said wards checked again to make sure the heads were all accounted for within the castle. So if someone left for a midnight snack, and nobody caught him, the castle would let him or her get away with the small act of rebellion.

On the other hand, if the heads in the castle were less than those accounted for within the common rooms and counting the faculty, then the wards would check which house was missing heads, and from there proceed to find out just who was the scoundrel that had seemingly decided to leave the castle in the middle of the night.

At the moment, he sincerely hoped it wasn't the murderer but just someone preparing some sort of prank for the giant squid in the lake. At the very least it would have given him peace of mind.

So Albus walked, the wind and the snow mixed with frozen rain fell harmlessly around him as he called forth his trusty old broom, flying into the forest while holding his right arm forward to ensure the wind did not fling him around. He should have sent someone of the younger professors to do this job, but he couldn't risk it: if, by chance, it really was the murderer, and if, always by chance, it turned out to be Mr. Scamander...

Then everything would be settled precisely on that night.

Tom Riddle

"Faster you useless flesh-sack! Faster! Is this the best you can do?"

"I'm...I'm trying...my lord...I'm..."

"We're going to lose them this way! Come on, follow them! They will not take my inheritance away from me!"

The root of a nearby tree treacherously betrayed it. The body fell on the ground, scraping its hands of a student, clearly not an adult, before standing slowly back up and running again. The breath was now coarser, the lungs burned from the effort, yet the body could not stop. The Dark Lord hissed in the ear and whispered words of anger and hatred and it could not stop. Faster the leg muscles had to move, faster the blood had to pump, faster the servant had to follow.

Yet the servant stumbled again, this time upon the body of a still and senseless red haired boy that was Weasley Ronald. It stopped and took a deep breath. Yes. It would do.

"I am strong enough now...get the quill, hold his hand, yes flesh-sack, do it! Good, write something, anything! Yes...Right...Good! I'm moving! Now stay and catch your breath, servant: you will catch up as soon as you can. I am most displeased for having to use the body of a blood traitor...one more line...yes..."

And then Ron Weasley's eyes opened with a feral red glint, just as those of the servant closed. It would rest only for a moment, only

long enough to catch its breath...it would follow. It wouldn't leave the diary of his Dark Lord in the hands of a meager worthless blood traitor. It wouldn't stand such an affront!

Basileus

"What do we want!?" The red haired teen yelled to the assembled students.

"Study!"

"When do we want it!?"

"Now!"

"How are we going to get it!?"

"With books!"

"Crash course of the first of December, session one, begin now!"

The cheers and the roars of the Ravenclaws were suddenly met with a moment of silence, as the door flung open and Filius Flitwick, their head of the house, entered the common room with a steady and decisive pace.

"Basileus, a word if you would be so kind?" The small professor said with a slight trace of weariness in his voice. The red haired teen scrunched his face, but soon stood up and followed the professor to a corner of the common room.

"Has Mr. Scamander reported back in from his detention with Professor Snape?"

The boy closed his eyes for a moment, before nodding quickly.

"Indeed he has. The wards are being jumpy a bit?" He asked.

"Course not. We've just now concluded that there are quite a few missing people from their dormitories, makes you wonder why students need to explore the castle by night when they could do so by day." The small man rolled his eyes, "makes you wonder what they do."

"Snogging in broom closets." Basileus deadpanned as the small professor began to stutter his embarrassment at the matter, "Our lovely Prefect Clearwater is such a shining example...She should be together with Mr. Percy Weasley...broom closet on the fifth floor, near the coat of arms of that old family, the Peverells."

The small man nodded, and then quickly excused himself to leave the boy and the study group to their usual antiques.

"You lied." A seventh year accused him quietly, "He's not come back at all." Basileus merely smiled back, before chuckling.

"I know. He's probably sleeping in a disused classroom somewhere: he's got some issues with security and with a murderer on the loose he's probably holed up in a safe place. After all it's not as if we're the ones holding our wands in our hands even while studying, right?"

He winked amicably, as the others sheepishly coughed while putting their wands back into their holsters.

"What if he's not safe and the murderer got him?" A tiny voice piped in from the female's staircase, from which a blond haired first year timidly made her way towards the study group. She was wearing a light sleeping dress, clearly to be used for the warmer months, and was apparently holding onto a tattered bear like her life depended on it.

"You're Miss Lovegood right?" Basileus asked, "No need to worry: your white knight is fine." He chuckled at that, knowing full well a crush when he saw one, since after all he...

"But the Heliopaths are on a war run...he's not fine." Luna shook her head quickly, "The Nargles, they say he's going to split if something doesn't happen soon...can't you help him please?"

"Is she bonkers?" A fifth year whispered, only to receive the mother, father and holy spirits of all death glares from the seventh and sixth years combined. "Sorry." The boy squeaked shrinking on his chair in fright that they'd actually butcher him.

"Why do you think I can?" Basileus asked, "I'm sure he's grown enough to help himself with what he needs, no?"

"But it's unfair." Luna muttered, "You stacked the odds badly..." She mumbled, "And the garlic doesn't always work."

In that precise moment, Basileus' smile froze on his face. It wasn't possible that...

"So can you help him please?" She asked again, "Pretty please?"

He slowly stood up and looked at the girl who merely stared back at him, clutching her teddy bear.

"I'll give you teddy if you help him: you're feeling lonely and you need him more than me, so if you help him..."

"All right." Basileus sighed as he looked back to the teary eyes of the rest of the study group, "Scamper back to bed pipsqueak. Billards, get her back to sleep. And keep your teddy girl." The boy mumbled, "I'm going out." He added, "If we lose points, then the fault's on the chimney this time around."

"No way! The Tea-Pot clearly did it!"

Chuckling at the strangely worded and phrased joke, Basileus headed off from the common room of Ravenclaw...he just knew that night was going to be completely and utterly bonkers.

He just had that feeling down in his bones...and if there was something he had learned, it was to never refuse it: it usually struck true.

Author's notes

And the chess pieces are moving!

Yeahy!

The Orthrus is the Two-Headed dog brother of Cerberus, and if you look on Wikipedia, the Cerberus **is** shown with two heads where Heracles brings him out.

The inner joke of the Ravenclaws is merely a: "We lost points, was it you?" "No, it was X." "No! It was Y!" "No, X!" "No, Y!" "Come on, it

can't have been the chimney now, right?" "Of course! The culprit is the Tea-pot!" "Wh..." "Yeah. Precisely." "No, that doesn't make..." "accept it: majority rules, the tea pot is the culprit." "But it can't lose points!" "...details."

Nanettez: no, disgusting was right. Would you eat a piece of meat knowing it can contain rocks within it? That said, for the reason Harry can see the Thestrals, it ties to a larger sub-plot that will come to the light later on.

For 'written in parseltongue' it was written by parselmouths, of course.

Southern-reader: That's yet another 'book' that has to come around later on. Really later on.

That said, hope you enjoyed.

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 18

The centaurs' grove was in no way different from the normal side of the Forbidden Forest. Not that there actually was a normal side of said forest, since it kept on looking dark and snowy and for the most part eerie no matter what light there could be, it still didn't change that somehow this part was...different. Maybe it was the smell mixed with the cold that burned through his nostrils, but the smell...the odors...it was different. It smelled like someone had burned manure, and as their steps took their deeper, the stench intensified.

Professor Snape remained quietly in front, his face a mask beneath which only the man knew what he was hiding. Harry had never asked why the potions' master was helping him, but it wasn't as if he could actually question him now, could he? They were both in it neck deep, and as far as he could tell Snape would get nothing by betraying him to one side or the other. That was considering the man to be helping him out of mere greed for something. It could also have been because of some completely different reason after all.

The fact the professor didn't feel offended at being treated as an equal, or didn't actively show it, was strange too. More so when the man did not take any initiative when confronting the other creatures of the forest...if he had to warrant a guess, he'd say the man was testing him.

The Orthrus, since with two heads Fluffy could no longer warrant being called a Cerberus, merely followed them in silence, every now and then panting or twitching one of its two heads to the side, probably because of a noise heard. Yet it did not stray far from Harry, as if the lack of his presence nearby could harm him. It actually looked more like a lost puppy than a fierce guardian dog, but at least it was on their side now.

"Centaur's tend to use small crude traps to keep intruders at bay." The potions' master remarked, "They also tend to grow Devil's snares around their camps. If we are lucky, we might avoid them entirely."

"Since when did luck go our way, Professor?" Harry bitterly muttered back. He felt Heather slightly shift in her position within his robes,

trying to get her head to an exit point to probably look at where they were going. Had it already been an hour since they had begun their walk? To think they'd also have to take the way back...still, they couldn't stop.

"Stop." Severus muttered after a few more minutes. "We turn left here." He mused, his wand shooting a light Lumos to stare at the strange looking vines that wrapped themselves around a bunch of trees. At the sight of the light, the vines twitched and began to ebb away from the tip of the wand. Harry nodded slowly, before walking straight behind the man and getting past the plant. "The tree tops are thicker around here: no sun usually comes around, perfect place for the plant to grow." Severus mused.

"I'm surprised there aren't any mushrooms around." Harry replied carefully, "Shouldn't there be with humidity and all?"

"Good observation, Mr. Scamander. Can you tell me why there aren't any mushrooms then?"

"Somebody eats them?" He hazarded as he avoided a dangerously looking root.

"Correct." Severus muttered. The light of his Lumos suddenly waned and disappeared, as Harry felt the man quickly push him against a tree bark. "Do not move." The head of Slytherin hissed. "We're being followed."

"Master?" Heather hissed, probably feeling the abrupt change in his walk. "Do you need help, master?"

Harry's hand slowly went within his robes to pat the snake, calming it down. There was no need for a Basilisk of all things to emerge right about then when subtlety was what was needed. Still, as his eyes slowly got better within the darkness, he realized Snape's words had been true. The Weasley boy, the very same red haired git he had taken down once before was now running, straight ahead, straight against...the Devil's Snare?

The boy probably thought he could foolishly reach them in time, running as he was in the dark. His robes were, even in the dark of the trees' shades, clearly torn and broken. Yet he moved on without stopping, until the Devil's Snare came abruptly down on him when

he did not stop and turn to the left of the magical plant. Again, the Weasley ended up being ensnared by the plant, and it was then, just as Harry was about to move and speak to him again, that Severus stopped him.

"He shouldn't be able to do that so soon." The man hissed. "Leave him there; the centaurs will see to him soon enough, but he shouldn't remember about us..." Harry stopped and nodded, before turning his back on the red haired boy. The professor remained still for a few seconds, before shrugging his probable sixth sense off and moving once more to lead. The Orthrus did not as much as growl, instead slowly keeping his walk to match the march of his master. Every now and then it would nudge with one of its heads at him, sniffing his smell as if to ensure he was still there. Harry didn't want to know what would happen, should the smell of the blood linger off.

Safely passing by the centaurs' lands, Snape relit his Lumos charm wordlessly, and the strange duo marched once more through the forest. Harry's wand was called into play once the undergrowth began to menace them outright with snapping sounds and thick steel-like protrusions that looked more like blades rather than thorns. Yet as Harry's wand launched Trunco and Snape's own every now and then came through with an Incendio, it was easy to pass by that side of the forest.

The thick of the forest left behind, the only thing that remained was to reach the outer rings of the trees and from there the lush green grasslands of Scotland would welcome them out. The worst, however, had yet to come.

"Now Mr. Scamander," Severus began slowly, "There are rocky formations around here, which is where usually the Trolls have their caves. Proceed with caution and remember that, while Forest Trolls are generally weaker than Mountain Trolls, they are still highly resistant to magic."

Harry nodded, as the now sparse canopy of trees reflected the small betterment of the forest, which held no longer thick thorns and hateful vines but meeker plants and far more light, coming from a half-filled moon. He had read that some Werewolves inhabited the forest, far away in the outer rims, but he was just grateful it wasn't a night with the full moon. He didn't think for a second that things would be easier: they had just passed the point of Hell that would

bring them towards Purgatory, after all. The only problem was that Satan hadn't shown himself yet.

Would he? He kind of wondered if he would actually.

A soft lullaby nursery tune began to play around them, soon followed by a light thud as Fluffy fell on the ground asleep, as if that music held some sort of magical property. What happened next made his blood run cold. A figure walked out of the thick canopy of trees, clutching in his right hand a wand while in his left he held what seemed like a locket. The golden initials of S...The...That was his locket, wasn't it? Yes, it was his.

"Professor Quirrell?" Harry muttered in shock as a red spell shot forward from the man's wand, hitting straight in the chest the potions' master and sending him on the ground, stupefied and not dead, Harry hoped.

"What?" The professor asked back, "Surprised to see me now, Mr. Dursley?" The man asked with a twinge of a smile. A twinge of a fanged smile that made shivers run down through the boy's skin. "To think you were kind enough to point me in the right direction, I never returned that favor, did I?" The man mused out loud. "Of course, had I known what it was that you wanted...I wouldn't have gone to Albania, of all places, to look for it." The man growled lightly.

"The Vow was made however, and this...thing, is yours now." The turban wearing man launched it on the ground, at Harry's feet. "Tell me, Mr. Dursley, do you know what you had me do?" He inclined his head to the side as the turban slid down to reveal a ghastly, moaning face behind it, one that the professor showed by spinning his head of one hundred and eighty degrees. "You had me snare a fragment of a soul from an object, and I still wonder how you knew it. I still wonder how you managed to control a Basilisk and I still wonder why you had me look for the locket in question." The professor's voice was growing shriller by the second.

"You have no idea how much it hurts to become a Vampire, Mr. Dursley, yet to pass the blood wards around the Black Estate I had to do far worse. Kill off shriveled old wizards, drink their blood and nothing else, fill myself with it just so I could enter and look...and that was only the end, oh I assure you, you had me running around half the globe...now that you have the locket, however..." The man's

lips closed themselves tightly as a snarling set of voices echoed around them.

"I've got to give it to you: a Basilisk is a ferocious beast...but there is always worse around, if one knows where to look for it." The snarling sound belonged to...to a beast, a sort of small leopard whose mouth had been sewed shut. "I'm sure you have questions..." Quirrell said with a small smile, as his wand flicked towards the snarling beast which was chained to a tree nearby, "The most important of whom should be 'How did he know we would go out today?' That is surprisingly easily, I suppose."

The man chuckled, as he tapped one of his ears. "I've got good spies."

"You're...Voldemort." Harry muttered, his hand trembling. "You can't be him. He's..."

"Please, don't tell me you think I'm dead too." The face of Voldemort rolled its eyes, "Truly, you should have already encountered my other selves, have you not?"

"There are...more of you?" Harry's question was filled with disbelief, as the man in front of him chuckled.

"Of course child. Death holds no sway over me! I am Voldemort! It cannot die." The man hissed, "What can forever lie, and within strange eons, even Death may die." The quote he used, Harry knew it, of course.

"Lovecraft? We're in the middle of a forest and you quote Lovecraft?"

"I find it is surprisingly fitting," the Quirrell-Voldemort body spoke as its head turned, "I wonder however, what are you waiting for? Take the locket, come on...it's there on the ground." The man pressed on, and for once a hint of suspicion ran within Harry's eyes.

"Why should I?"

"Don't ask me...you were the one who wanted it, last year. You used a Basilisk to force me into an unbreakable vow...but you won't do that again." The man muttered back, "That is a Nundu." He smiled,

"Its breath can kill anything around it. Unleash your pet and both will die...and you value your pet a lot don't you? Heather...you called it Heather of all things," there was disgust on the man's face, "A tool for murder called with a name that belongs to a human...disgusting."

Harry took a deep breath, as he locked eyes with the figure of the wizard. He probably couldn't attack him for as long as he had that vow on, but...but he wasn't going to test it. Just when had that happened? He recalled having spoken to the professor last year, in the Forbidden Forest, but it had been daylight and then...that brief moment of Albus claiming the professor was indisposed? Was that...had that been his work?

No.

Henry had done it.

He had possessed him long enough to do this, but the question remained...what was the locket? And why would Quirrell have to find it? What was more, why did his chest hurt as if it had been torn asunder, by the feeling that Henry or Helga had used him for something and kept it a secret from him? He couldn't believe it to be true. The ghosts had helped him, so there was no way they would do this to him, would they? They were his family, family he could call that because of blood and because no-one would ever refuse it...

"Who told you?" Harry asked again, carefully.

"Now that would be telling." Quirrell smiled, "And why would I tell you?" He added with a chuckle. "You know...I think you should really take that locket." He mused, "If you don't, I might just have to kill Fluffy, and Severus." The voice was cold now, cold and uncaring as eyes red as rubies shone within the orbits of the man. The Nundu groaned; the chains and the stitches holding him still clanking and yet not making a sound, probably hidden by a charm. How long had he waited for him there? How long had he known they would pass by there?

Only Severus knew the road, right? Yet he had been stunned. What if this had been a trap laid for him from the beginning? What if the man had lied and...wasn't this what the professor had tried to tell him? Not to trust anyone? He hadn't thought he could pretty much

die. He had thought...hell, no-one thinks they're going to die ever. Yet this...

He didn't want to die.

He would not die.

"Trudo!" He roared as ethereal lances drove themselves forward, cackling with magic as they whirled through the air to infringe against a soft ethereal shield. The professor had his wand out and was already smiling as the locket...the locket soared in the air as it landed against Harry's chest.

"There. Delivery made." And then the wand was faster than Harry could follow it.

He was flung from the ground against a nearby tree, the impact shattering the bark as he could feel his own bones snapping one after the other, multiple curses flying against him with such strength it was a wonder he could still keep his wits.

"Now, now! No fainting on me, Mr. Dursley!" The voice was harsh and guttural. "Did you think I would let such a stint go by? You are but a witless and stupid child! I know all that you did and you did it wrong! See this?" Pain flared through his body, as he felt Heather trying to slither her way out, probably to try and help him. "This is what you get when you bark like a lion while you're nothing more than a flea." His body was slammed on the ground, and as his eyes blurred, he stared at the face of the professor.

"You see, Mr. Dursley, nothing escapes me. I know...you must find it difficult to breathe: I did break your ribs didn't I? One is probably puncturing your lungs. What? You thought you could fight me? Ah! Such a nice stupid thing..." His body was levitated right in front of Quirrell, who held him there with his wand. "Being a child is no excuse for being an idiot, Mr. Dursley." And with one final flick, an orange light hit him as if a mallet had twisted through his guts, sending him a good way backwards, crumbling on the ground as darkness enveloped him.

He was floating. The Darkness was such a nice sight; it freed him of worries and it embraced him. He would rather sleep in there most

comfortably, since it was, after all, what was meant for him. Was he dead? Then again, did it matter? Of course it did.

Heather Watson

She felt disoriented at first. While her thick hide resisted the magical energies sent her way, there was no doubt in her mind that whoever was attacking her master was strong. She had tried to wriggle to freedom from her master's robes, but had resisted the urge only because she knew that it was her own hide covering most of her master's chest that had saved him from a far worse fate. She wouldn't let this master die. She didn't want to remain alone for another millennium. She couldn't hear and she couldn't know what was going on, but she knew she had to do something.

As she regained her full size, she was swiftly assaulted by blinding lights that forced her to keep her eyes closed. She didn't need eyes to target her enemies, but she would have rather known whom she would be eating. Her tongue darted out, as the outlines of the forest came into her mind, displaying a man standing so measly on his feet with a smaller and strange looking beast chained next to him. The man's wand flicked and the beast was freed just as the figure flew in the air.

She darted, trying to bite into the flying morsel but being stopped by the very own trees, whose branches deformed into wooden ropes as thick as the trees' trunks themselves. She snapped her mouth open with a bellowing hiss, cracking apart the impromptu chains as her tail lashed out furiously, tearing through the wooden barks that held now spikes. The smaller beast was free now, and its jaws were bleeding as it perilously charged through...but not against her, no.

It dared to charge against her master. She turned her head, ready to devour the worthless creature that would dare such an affront, when a strong weight crushed her halfway, forcing her to writhe as her tongue slashed around, trying to come to sense of what was going on. Somehow, the earth had been cracked open to enclose her mid-section within it, and the weight was preventing her from turning around.

She could do nothing but watch as the creature ran on its paws to devour her master. She could do nothing. Just like the last time...she couldn't save her master.

As her hiss came together with tears, the Nundu jumped in the air, its claws ready...and then Fluffy pounced on him.

The two Headed dog was growling with its fangs showing, having probably awoken after the noises made by the battle. It had seen enough to know that its master was in danger, and because of that it had charged at the attacking beast. The Nundu was smaller, and yet as its breath left the mouth of the beast, the grass around it died and withered, while the earth turned greyish and cracked.

Fluffy knew nothing of the sort of course. He knew only that he had to guard his master from harm, and so he barked and growled and pounced. The beast dove to the side, avoiding a strong paw from crushing it as it clawed beneath the left forward leg with its own claws, making the dog whine and lash out with its body. The ground trembled as the fiercer and bigger dog fought to get a hit on the Nundu, while the creature merely played by darting through legs of the dog, eliciting wide gashes to open into its body.

As Fluffy bled and Heather tried to get away from the trap, a soft music once more began to play. Heather didn't actually hear the music playing, but she did see the dog starting to wobble with his reflexes waning. She redoubled her effort, until finally her skin gave way at the improvised skin-change, leaving behind only raw skin and blood as she head-butted the Nundu from the side.

She ended up sprawled together with Fluffy, but the Nundu had apparently gotten the lesson from the pain of the head-butt, because it retreated as fast as it could. It was then that the ear muffs she was wearing suddenly lifted themselves from her ears.

"Such a pity." The voice muttered, "Listen to me, Basilisk! Obey my will for I am the true descendant of Salazar!"

"You are not my master!" She hissed back, turning to stare at the monster who had dared harm her master. It was then, that she stilled. The man was holding a rooster within his hands, and was displaying its disgust, as his wand gently touched the poultry's head.

"Then die." It whispered back...and the rooster awoke.

It took a second, for the Rooster to realize where he was. It took even less to understand how he had gotten there. In the end, however, the Rooster did what all animals have to do when they woke up.

It crowed, and in that moment, blinding pain assaulted Heather's head.

Ron Weasley

His body was hurting like mad. He didn't remember what he was doing in the forest, but he knew he was hurrying along when a plant caught him. He had then been brought to the Centaurs, and from there Albus Dumbledore had come to get him. Now, the two of them were returning towards the castle, and as they were flying slowly on a creaky broomstick he held little doubt wouldn't fall before long, the elderly Headmaster decided to speak.

"Mr. Weasley, I must applaud your courage in seeking the murderer of your colleagues at Hogwarts," the man began, "And I must admit I would have never thought the Acromantulas to be connected to it, yet proof was displayed this day thanks to your heroic actions, and for that, I will not punish you for your blatant disregard of the rules." The Headmaster stated.

"Oh...Uh...Thanks professor?"

"Indeed, we will remove the Acromantulas soon enough; it is saddening that Hagrid's own faults ended up bringing harm to the population...unluckily the man's sentence to Azkaban will be for life. I will make sure he avoids being kissed however: it was not his intention, only his mistake that caused what happened this year."

"Isn't there anything we can do?" Ron whispered with his voice coarser, "I mean...Hagrid's a good bloke. He didn't mean to! I know some people died, but...Azkaban's a bad place."

Albus sighed.

"I am grieving far more than it looks like, Mr. Weasley, but unfortunately laws are there for a reason. While looking for you I also found remains, human remains mind you, within the dead

Acromantulas' bodies near you...you fought them well I must add." The man said gently, "I'm sure you will do well at the dueling club."

"Oh...Right. I...I'm sure I will." Ron replied embarrassedly.

"I have to ask however: how did you pass through the aurors' patrols?" The voice was kind, and Ron found himself tightening his grip on the broomstick for fear of falling down.

"Well...I used Lillian's invisibility cloak. You know professor? The one she's got from her father and all...You insisted she carried it around, and since she was petrified and..." his words died in his mouth as the Headmaster's voice slowly turned thoughtful.

"I see, Mr. Weasley...I suppose the cloak is still back there. I did not look much around, but I'll make sure it's found again and delivered back to its rightful owner." The old man nodded to himself, "Now tell me, when you realized it had to be the Acromantulas, why didn't you contact any of the professors?"

"Well...I thought they wouldn't listen like last year, Headmaster." He replied slowly, "I knew they wouldn't have believed me; not without Lillian or Hermione to help me."

"Miss Granger did not come with you?" Albus asked quietly.

"No Headmaster, she did not." Ron replied, "She had homework...she's always been the down to earth one of the trio."

"Good, have you told revealed any of what you have discovered to her?"

"Well, no sir. Only that I thought it had to be someone in the Forbidden forest. Hagrid told the guys at the ministry to follow the spiders, and so...I kind of did it alone." At those words, he could feel Dumbledore humming softly in approval.

"Very well. For your courage and bravery against all odds, I will award you with fifty points, Mr. Weasley."

"That's bloody awesome professor!" Ron exclaimed grinning. Now he would really like to see what that damn Scamander could do to change the odds.

"Of course, this will be kept between us." The window of the Headmaster's office came into view, and as its window opened to admit the two of them inside, Ron saw the old man frown.

"Most curious." He began. "You may go to sleep, Mr. Weasley: I will write you a pass."

Ron shrugged and waited, while his eyes looked around. The perch of the phoenix was empty, but the great amount of ashes beneath it was probably hiding the baby phoenix...he did recall vaguely that Lillian had told him that the Headmaster's phoenix was prone to dying rather quickly and then being reborn just as fast...

Oh well.

"Oh, and I was nearly forgetting, Mr. Weasley." Dumbledore said with a kind smile. "Can't have you claim you knew before the headmaster, can we?"

"Uh? Professor, what are you going on about..."

"Obliviate."

Harry Scamander

It hurt. It hurt like hell as he felt pain flare through his entire body and leave him quaking. He felt something tug at his very soul and tremble as flares and bouts of scorching heat walked through his skin with a tingling sensation that was excruciating. His eyes popped open with a groan, and as they did, he stared with shock and surprise at a figure holding a sleek looking broom and wielding a wand on the other hand.

"Whazzup." He blurted out half-asleep and half in pain, as he tiredly tried to get on his feet. A small shrill that sent pain through his brain reached him from his lap, and as he turned to stare at the source of it, a bright red chicken was looking at him.

Well, it looked more like a small red peacock actually, but it resembled more a chick. It was also bawling its eyes out to begin with, crying all over his wounds with heart-wrenching sobs and pitiful chirps.

"Oh, you know Harry, the usual." The man retorted with a slight grin. "Face evil, defeat it and then come back for more." The blurred figure chuckled, "Luckily I placed a charm on Severus, or I wouldn't have known about this. Thank the gods my broom riding isn't bad, huh?" The Voice spoke. It was blurred, and he couldn't pretty much see anything with the light that was there, but he knew the figure had to be at least somewhat tall.

"Well, enough of this happy chat." The Voice added. "Hey there, Quirinus! Time to get the..."

Cracks. Explosions. Roaring of spells being flung and returned.

"Calm down! I'm just..."

More spells, rather higher pitched explosions. Harry tumbled on the ground and rolled away, trying to get a hang of the world without his glasses. He could see a giant form laying on the grass near him, just as he could see another one walking uneasily on its legs. The one on four giant paws had to be Fluffy of course, and as he clutched the red chicken to his chest, he began to make his way towards the other figure.

A feeling of dread reached him as he scampered to his feet and kept running towards it, unaware that behind him two figures were flinging spells to one another. He did not stop until his left hand touched the scale-like surface of the cylindrical creature.

"No." He whimpered. "No." He added as he began to run towards its head. It couldn't be. Right? It couldn't...

"Heather? Come on, answer me." He implored. His eyes covered in tears. "Please." He added trying to nudge the head of the Basilisk. "Come on. You can't be dead." He mumbled. "Please answer me."

There was a low whine coming from Fluffy, who fell on the ground near him. "Please?"

"Why are you here!? What the hell is Albus' objective with..."
Explosion.

"I'm not working for Albus." The Voice replied. "Surprise!" A small sound of wood cracking, splinters falling on the ground.

"Argh! You can't hope to defeat us! You're..."

"And for the magic trick of the night: sawdust is highly inflammable!" Yet one last explosion, followed by yells and screams of pain. "And that's the end of it." The Voice finished, as silence descended in the clearing.

Too much silent, for Harry's quaking body which trembled under the tears that fell from his eyes. He cried. He cried for the snake that had no fault but having decided to follow him. He cried for the animal he had brought into danger. He cried for the faults he had done and for the eye opener that Quirrell had been. He cried...and he vowed revenge among his bitter tears.

Basileus

The situation was, after all, perfect. He saw them, standing in the clearing next to a dead Basilisk and a wounded Cerberus. All that would take him was a mere Bombarda spell, or something far stronger and darker, to get rid of all of his problems in one shot. Yet he knew all too well he couldn't do it in that moment. He respected the mourning at the very least...he always did. As he uncapped the small vial that he drunk, to hold onto his semblance as a teenager, and with which he had laced most of his personal food and drinks in order to bypass the gazes of the other students, he smiled to himself.

The night was long from being over, after all.

As he turned to leave, knowing that the worse was over, his thoughts returned to that blond haired girl. Just what was she trying to imply with that? He shivered, remembering who had told him that sentence, years ago.

"Vampires are overrated Albus! Garlic covering and bam, down they go."

"You should know better!" The voice was shocked at his proclamation, "The Ministry wouldn't claim them a five X threat if garlic was enough!"

"I'm saying you are the one overestimating those beasts, Albus."

"Be as it may, garlic may not be enough for what you plan to do, Gellert." There was always that twinkle of worry, in Albus' eyes. He really did care for him as a brother, didn't he?

"You're a worrywart. Everything's going to be fine."

They lost a friend that day. Something broke...and in the end, as it had turned out, Albus had been right: garlic isn't always enough...some times, harsher means are needed to drive home a point.

Had he remained in the clearing a bit more, he would have heard a single, hissed, sentence coming out from the Basilisk's mouth.

Author's notes

Chapter done.

Who had tied the black's disappearances with the locket search and with the Quirrell events of the first book? (That said...climax still coming upwards!)

Heather is not dead.

Last time I did something like this (implying that a character was dead) people crucified me claiming that she came back in the next chapter as a deus Ex machina. So no, I'm coming clear here in the notes: she's still alive.

And there are questions to be answered, oh yeah!

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 19

"Master." The low hiss reached his ears just as he was about to start crying hard again, as his eyes travelled upwards to the blurry head of Heather, he realized that the yellow eyes were actually open and slowly, ever so, the basilisk's head was moving around. "Are you alright?" Heather asked, with concern in her voice.

Harry quickly wiped away his tears, before lunging forward and hugging as much as he could the giant Basilisk, whose moving tongue practically acted as a hand in ruffling the boy's hair. He was glad his friend was safe and fine. Furthermore, whatever Quirrell might have done was now gone from his body. If anything, he felt better than ever before...although he was now holding a wailing chicken within his arms.

"I believe I can take it from here." The Voice interrupted gently. "Hand me over the Portkey for Prince Manor, Severus."

"Of course," The Potions master drawled, as Harry saw the man's blurry figure hand over some sort of stone to the other figure, who was apparently sporting some beard down her chin. It had to be a wizard, and yet he wore a comfortable looking cardigan that resembled those that well wealthy men usually garbed when going to play golf. "I take it you're enjoying your new...lifestyle?"

"Of course I am." The Voice remarked with a light chuckle. "Now off you two go...You can trust me, Harry: I'll make sure your Basilisk reaches safety...you can tell her that, would you? And I believe the locket is yours; it is, after all, that of Salazar Slytherin himself."

Harry gulped down nervously, touching the hard gleaming surface of the locket that had apparently ended up within the folds of his clothes, before meekly whispering back.

"Who are you, sir?" He asked carefully.

"Just an old man boy," the Voice replied with a shrug, "Just an old man who wishes to keep his identity hidden for just a little bit longer."

"How can I trust you?" Harry asked then, "I...I don't know you."

"I know." The Voice chuckled, "But I just fought Quirinus for you, and once this summer comes around, I guarantee you will find out who I am; but not now. It's not time yet."

Harry hesitated.

"Mr. Scamander, you may trust him if nothing else: you owe him your life, after all." Severus remarked easily. "While I may not speak of what his objectives are, know that none will damage you: that much I can swear it upon my magic should you wish for it."

His shoulders slumped in defeat, as he began to hiss.

"Heather: I want you to go with the man with the beard, all right?" He tapped on the snake's nose as he said that. "I'll see you soon, I promise."

"Master is not coming?" The snake hissed not understanding, as she slowly coiled onto herself, the wounds near the center of her coils already closing, as if some sort of salve had been applied on them. "My place is at master's side." The snake strongly protested with a disapproving hiss.

"Heather: this is for your own good!" Harry hissed back, "Someone's trying to kill you!"

"Let them try! I will devour them all!" The snake proudly said back, smugness in her tone as if she was inherently pleased with her ability of eating enemies. Harry shook his head slowly, starting to rub the nose of the basilisk.

"Please? For me? Trust me, I promise I'll see you this summer. Really. I swear it." The basilisk narrowed her eyes, before hissing back calmly.

"It's a promise." The basilisk calmly nodded then, and then turned to stare at the blurry figure that was the Voice. "Let's go then."

"She says she's coming right behind you." Harry said with a bit of sadness in his voice, as he waved a final goodbye to the blurring figure of Heather, who slowly and unwillingly followed behind the

other blurred Voice. He stayed there, quietly. His tears had already dried up, and without a precise idea of what to do next, he began to look for his glasses.

"Harry," Severus' voice cut in after a few minutes, tapping to his shoulder the frame of his glasses. Quickly, the boy put them on, and finally, he could see. He had a little baby phoenix in his right hand, that kind of sung small sharp chirps while bunking down on her feathers. She looked more like one of those feather dusters rather than an actual phoenix, and as she shivered because of the cold, Harry merely placed her in his free inner pocket.

"Here: you'll be warm now." He added quietly, gently rubbing the top of the phoenix head with the tip of his fingers. He smiled slowly at the sight of the phoenix crooning with pleasure, her eyes closed and her head bobbing up and down just like those funny owl pictures of small owls being petted.

"Where did she come from?" Harry asked out of the blue, looking around. "Was there a nest of sorts near here?"

"Phoenixes do not sprout from nests, Harry." Severus remarked, "I believe you are holding onto Fawkes, the Headmaster's pet phoenix. It must have sensed you were in danger and acted accordingly...which is strange, since they are usually extremely loyal creatures. The Headmaster must have done something horrible, to have him depart and seek a new master."

"Oh..." He muttered, "But Fawkes is a male name: she's a female." He replied carefully.

Severus raised an eyebrow, "And how would you know that, exactly?"

Harry shrugged. "I just know."

The potions' master took a deep breath, before finally looking at the road ahead of them.

"We should get going, Harry." The boy merely nodded, "And then you can explain me how you knew such level of spells as Trudo...you know they are prohibited?" The man mused, "They are

reserved for war, and as such unless there is a state of emergency it is a grave offense to use them...who taught them to you?"

"A relative." Harry whispered to himself, his eyes softening as he petted Fawkes head, "I don't want to get him in trouble though."

"You were lucky I was the one to see it. Does anyone else know?" Severus asked carefully.

"I killed the troll in first year with the spell," he whispered, "Had to save my sister." He added meekly, "Couldn't let the troll eat her, could I?"

"Oh? So she holds a life debt with you now, does she?" The potions' master replied offhandedly, "The more time passes the more I'm assured..." The man muttered, shaking his head slowly, "In any event Harry, you must keep your eyes open. The murderer is still at large, after all."

"What?" Harry's breath hitched in his throat, "No! Wasn't it Quirrell?"

"No." Severus remarked, "It couldn't be him. He couldn't have gone past all the wards of the castle as a vampire. Maybe he could have enslaved someone with the Imperius to do his bidding, but more than that..." Harry merely nodded at the professor's words, before steadily setting his pace behind the man. As they made their walk back, the professor frowned after they reached once more the 'heart' of the forest.

"There's another light ahead." He whispered. "Someone else?"

Harry narrowed his eyes, trying to scrunch up some sort of description of the figure. It seemed lithe enough to be a girl, a student like him too. Who could it be? For a moment, Harry's thoughts went to who could possibly come to look after him. Neville was out. Maybe Hannah or that Tracey girl? Would either of them go that far for him? For all they knew he was safely tucked in bed that night, wasn't he?

It took the light only a few moments to get closer, and when it did, Severus growled lightly. His wand was up and pointed at the girl before Harry could say anything, and as the man walked out of the shadows, he bellowed.

"Well, look what we have here," the professor began with a sneer, "What are you doing out of the castle so late at night, Miss. Granger!?"

The bushy brown haired girl turned to stare at the professor, and in that small second, Harry felt the need to scream. The eyes of the girl...they were red.

"Professor! She's not..."

"Oh, Severus." The girl purred, "How good of you to be here." It added, "Please, lower your Occlumency shields...I will need your body for my revenge on this...this spawn here who dared defy me of what was mine by birthright!" The creature hissed, and as Severus hesitated, Hermione's wand was already out casting a red stream of fire through the tip towards them both.

Severus flicked his wand to redirect the fire away from them by conjuring a shield, but as he did so Harry found himself wincing at the heat that seemed to propagate from the fire.

"Severus! Remove thyself. I am your Lord! You must obey me!" The young girl snarled, "Was Lucius right then? Were you nothing more than a spy for the light!? A spy for Dumbledore!?" The eyes of Hermione shone as brightly as the fire cast by her wand itself, as snarling words in a language that seemed Greek came out of her mouth.

"Fiendfyre, here!? Are you mad, Granger!? You cannot control it!" Severus roar fell on deaf ears as the thick undergrowth near them caught on to the fire, already lighting up the forest as it propagated throughout their surroundings. "Claiming to be the Dark Lord will lead you nowhere, girl. I will have you expelled for this tasteless joke!"

The Greek words kept on coming, and as they did, Harry's right hand itched upwards, grasping onto the wand as it was meant to be his battle to fight and win. The crooning of Fawkes reached his ears gently however, and the feeling passed. He quickly dashed back, running deeper into the undergrowth. If he ran, then the girl would be forced to follow him after all.

A bush was uprooted near him, as the ground flew in the air before landing all around the newly formed hole in the dirt. Harry did not stop as he could clearly feel the spells being flung his way until, in the end, no more came around. By the time he stopped his running, he was already knee deep in the mud somewhere in the middle of the forest.

The head of Fawkes bobbed out of his robes, looking at him with a slight peek of curiosity.

"Mud. I'm knee deep in mud if you want to know." Harry deadpanned, staring at the dark eyes of the phoenix, whose feathers apparently were phosphorescent enough to see a bit around him. Maybe he should buy a perch of sorts and place her on top of it: free torch light.

The phoenix hooted, Harry could swear the legendary magical bird was mocking him by hooting at him, and then her head went back inside his robes, in one of his inner pockets probably. He groaned as he could still hear sounds of magic clashing behind him, but could not turn around easily to find out who it was or who was actually winning...he found it strange however that Snape, of all people, would be facing an effort in defeating Hermione. Yet the red eyes...

It was Voldemort. How could it be possible? Had he gone back to school after the death of Quirrell, to possess someone else? How could he actually jump from body to body like that without troubles? Was he a Wraith, a Ghost, a...was he going to need the Ghostbusters to get rid of him!?

Fawkes sung merrily within his robes, before starting to peck at something metallic, due to the chinking sound he heard. Since he couldn't actually move in the mud, his hand reached for the golden locket, and he looked at the serpentine S, inlaid with glittering, green stones: It was easy to visualize it as a minuscule snake concentrating on the letter S, imagining a serpent, while the contents of the locket rattled like a trapped cockroach. Harry stared at it with curiosity, and as the golden doors of the locket swung wide with a little click, the locket's own interior came known to him.

It was a container for something grand. That much Harry knew. He knew there was more to it than merely a placeholder for a scrap of paper or a photo. He knew it from the moment his eyes laid

themselves on the bare golden surface of the interior of the locket. His instinct was not wrong. He knew it could not be wrong.

"Open." He snarled at the golden locket, and as the bottom of it gave way, instead of finding a small compartment within, Harry saw darkness. Just like one of those pouches who could hold far more things than usual, Harry's fingers went in without a second thought, and when they came out, a ring popped free with it, tied to a golden chain.

"My ring will be wielded only by those I have chosen, Godric! I will not have it given out as a marriage prop to blood relatives or the likes! Only the worthy shall use my ring: to the others, death is all that will be mercifully given."

"Come on now, you jest Salazar! It's just a ring out of the many you have: why did you enchant it so?"

"Because...No. I will not tell. It is not my tale." The voice was pained as it spoke.

"Maybe...something else then? What about that sword you're forging?"

"It won't be finished for long, Godric. Leave it. I'll find a gift, you can rest assured. Merlin is my favorite apprentice after all."

"Knowing you, it might just as well be a horse's shoe."

"Which brings luck, last you checked."

"Know-it-all."

"Wasn't that Rowena's name? How's her daughter by the way?"

"Two months old and..."

"Can't believe it..."

The voices became buzzes, until in the end they died out as the light singing of Fawkes echoed in the mud clearing, where just then a rope had been apparently flung near him. The rope was tied to a nearby stump of a tree, and he grabbed onto it, pulling to get out

while gritting his teeth. His thoughts lingered on what his mind was trying so desperately to tell him, but finally, with a heavy huff, he got himself to shore.

The phoenix chirped happily, without a care in the world from within his robes. He had to decide on a name for her after all: something catchy and clearly female. He just hoped Heather wouldn't feel offended about it...or Machiavelli. The poor hybrid owl was probably feeling jealous, having been left in the owl tower for that long. Maybe he could use him to write a letter somewhere. At least, that was his hope if he got out of there alive.

"Harry!" A voice bellowed with a familiar tone, and just as it did, Fawkes talons actually ended up scraping his chest as they went through his shirt. The phoenix began to cry, but it didn't feel like a cry of attention. Actually, it felt as if the creature itself didn't want the man to move closer. Basileus appeared slightly disheveled from the tree top, holding himself upon a Nimbus two-thousand. Harry blinked: he hadn't thought the boy, out of everyone, would actually possess a racing broom.

"Found you!" He said with a light smile, just as the screeching of Fawkes grew louder. "What's making that noise now? A cockatrice?" The red haired teen asked as he descended from his broom, his wand already lighting up to bring more light into the spot he had ended up. "Well now that's a sight. Where did you find a phoenix?"

"In the forest." Harry replied uneasily, "You know...she's a bit of a softie: crying always around and...ouch! Come on Sophie! Stop it." The boy hastily said, deciding that if he had to use a female name, 'Sophie' would do. "And she's getting really crank...ouch, well yeah. I think she needs to sleep." He added quickly as the phoenix was outright screaming as a siren...or as much as some sort of small chick could of course. It sounded more like tweeting actually, but it was a really angry type of tweeting.

"Ah, phoenixes don't like me." Basileus said with an awry smile, "Don't know why exactly, but I've found out that the more magical a creature is, the less they seem to like me. Pretty much Flobberworms are the only ones who don't try anything strange." The boy added with a small chuckle. "Let's get you out of here, shall we?"

"What about Professor Snape?" Harry asked quickly.

"What about him?" Basileus remarked with a worried expression, "He was with you? I thought...well...I kind of thought he was fighting you since you were the one running and Hermione's a student. Better if we go back to them then, don't you think?"

Harry nodded as fast as he could, and as he scampered to his feet, he began to pry away Sophie from his chest. The thing was hurting him after all! The walk back was done slower, but by the time they arrived both Hermione and Snape were apparently on the ground, knocked out.

"Skill matters not when you stun them from the back." Basileus cited with a small grin, "That's a lesson to remember." Harry neared Hermione, looking at her with slight worry as he could see her left side of the face being scorched by fire and still burning lightly. Her robes were cut and singed, and she was bleeding slightly from the mouth and the nose.

"She'll probably carry that scar for a long time." Basileus murmured, probably having seen him staring. Harry cringed. Was Voldemort really so evil that he used children to do his bidding? Still, just how did he manage to possess Hermione to begin with? Was he somewhere in the school?

Sophie chirped, slowly and sadly as she jumped out of his robes and fluttered her wings to lower her to the ground, before reaching for Hermione's ruined clothes and start to peck on something within them. Harry's face scrunched up in a frown, as he removed what seemed to be like a black journal of sorts. As he touched it, he hissed in pain and dropped the thing. He clutched onto his chest, where the golden pocket watch of Salazar was positively burning as if on fire.

His screams turned Basileus attention to him, and when the teen got near, his expression was all but pleasant.

"Harry? What's wrong!?"

"The...Diary...it burns..." Harry hissed with a strangled voice. "It's..." Basileus merely nodded, before flicking the diary with his wand upwards and conjuring with yet another flick...some sort of dark

purplish fire. The diary burned among sharp shrieking screams, and with that the burning sensation of the pocket watch stopped.

"Lesson number something of the wizardry world: everything can be cursed, Harry." Basileus said, "Let me see if you're wounded." The man had barely moved a hand near him, that Sophie already started pecking at him, flying in some sort of 'flea-like' way to keep the teen away. "Oh for the love of Merlin calm down you!" The boy muttered, "It's not like I'm going to kill him!" The shrill the 'flea-phoenix' sent back was practically accusing him of precisely wanting to do that. Harry didn't know phoenixes could be that possessive.

"All right." Basileus muttered, taking his wand out and stilling the bird in mid-air. "I'm sorry, but next time you'll learn not to meddle with a future medi-wizard to be!" The boy commented offhandedly, before finally checking for injuries while Harry held the now immobile Sophie with his hands. As soon as he was done looking at him, the red haired teen returned mobility to the phoenix and jumped back, to avoid being the target of pecking.

"She's got a nasty temper at that!" Harry chuckled, as he began to pet the phoenix' head in order to calm her down. She was probably acting all protectively of him because she was...what? Considering him her mother of sorts? She was a child after all...did phoenixes possess the Imprinting thing too?

"So, can you drive a broom?" Basileus asked quietly, while eying the two fallen figures. "I think I can levitate Professor Snape and myself at the same time, but it would be great if you could get Miss Granger back to the infirmary of Hogwarts while on the broom."

"B-But if they ask why we were outside?" Harry hesitated. He had nearly forgotten that Basileus wasn't what he looked like, and for that, just so suddenly, he began to worry. The red haired teen caught that, because he winked with a tight smile before retorting.

"Trust is something easy to give, and yet it hurts when it is betrayed, isn't it?" He spoke slowly, "Well, can't fault you for being suspicious." He sighed, "If your poultry," the phoenix literally screeched at him in offense, "As I was saying: if the poultry knew how to teleport, she could bring you and miss Granger back without trouble."

Harry looked uneasily around. He wasn't that good at flying after all.

"Look. We can either go back or wait until someone comes to get us." Basileus drily remarked. "I can't guarantee that both of them won't worsen however: so we'd be better off going now." Harry meekly nodded, accepting the broom from Basileus' hands and climbing onto it, while Sophie nestled within his robes once more. He then proceeded to hold onto Hermione as the broom departed slowly for the sky.

The Ravenclaw prefect was soon in the air next to him, holding his wand as he levitated both him and professor Snape, who didn't look actually well. The man's cloak had been neatly charred off, and he was apparently hanging from being dead by some sort of unknowing magical miracle probably. Of course, now Harry was in the air risking his neck, while holding onto a girl who was anything but someone worthy of having as a friend, but he still couldn't help but feel dread at the thought that they were returning in the lion's den, or the snake's nest.

Finally, the castle came into view just as the light in the sky became a few shades less dark, clearly indicating that it was indeed time to move. As they landed, Basileus nodded to Harry.

"I'll take them both in the infirmary. You head off to sleep. The version is that you finished your detention with Snape, went back in the castle, but the professor here saw Miss Granger leave and followed her. I was outside looking from the window and saw Miss Granger leave, so I decided to follow her from above with the broomstick. I'll probably get the lesson of a lifetime from professor Flitwick, but it should be enough to get Albus away from your involvement...and keep the phoenix hidden for the love of Merlin."

Harry merely nodded, before numbly starting to walk towards the Ravenclaw tower. He didn't stop to listen to the small talk the portraits were doing about him, some even asking him where the hell he had been. He simply walked, the adrenaline finally wearing off as he came to realize just what he had done that night. As his steps finally took him all the way within the common room, he was soon in his bed, falling asleep as if nothing could ever wake him up again.

Of course, he was wrong.

Albus

"Fawkes?" The old man asked to the charred perch. "Fawkes come on out." He added, before slowly turning around with worry. Everything else was at its place, wasn't it? The books he had personally taken from the library to safeguard, the lemon drops and the various tools to show the status of the wards around Hogwarts were all there. Yet something was missing.

"Any of you saw where Fawkes went?" He finally relented, and asked the portraits of the headmasters around. It was then that he realized why his office seemed so quiet: none of the portraits of the school's headmasters had the painted person within. He stilled again. It wasn't possible. Something had to be wrong. What was the most important thing in his office, barring Fawkes? The Elder wand was at his side, that much he was sure of...so that left...

The sorting hat was gone.

It wasn't there. Someone had taken it away. Albus blanked and took deep breaths to calm down. It wasn't possible. Nobody could enter the wards of the castle and take away one of the Founders most prized possessions. Furthermore, within the sorting hat stood the sword of Gryffindor: there simply was no way he would have let anyone steal him...right? But the wards hadn't rung. That could only mean one thing: someone who was keyed in had done all of this. And since Albus was the only one of the staff who could apparated within Hogwarts without a doubt...

It left her.

Bellatrix Scamander.

Albus growled, shock leaving the place to a deep bottomless anger. How dared the woman? How dared she steal from his office not only his phoenix but also the artifact built by the four founders themselves!? He was just thankful Augusta Longbottom was fighting together with him at the Wizengamot to overturn Scamander's custody. If he could win, then everything was going to be fine: he'd get the boy back with the Potters, the prophecy would not come to pass, and everyone would be happy.

He would even let the boy live, since there was no way he'd be able to become the prophesized bringer of change. To become him after all, he'd need the acknowledgement of all four of the founders' lines...and if he did indeed return a Potter through lawful means, then the Scamander wouldn't remain.

Acknowledged by the founders' blood, the changer will rise...

It was a pity he hadn't thought of that with the Dursley. Still, he couldn't even rectify it by now. Someone had burned down the apartment complex they were living in, and the reports did show there had been no survivors...

Of course, that someone was currently taking a lemon drop, but he had been forced to act quickly after the Potters had decided to track down the Dursley, and there was no way they wouldn't have realized in the long run that the muggles had been Imperius'ed.

"Ariana..." Albus sighed as he took a deep breath, "I'll make things right, I assure you...no matter the blood that will be spilled."

And then, with a pained expression, Albus turned and stared one last time at the burned perch of Fawkes. If alone he had to walk that path, then so he would...but he would see it to the very end.

Ron Weasley

Thankfully he hadn't gone into the Forbidden Forest the night before. The rumor was all over the common hall in that moment at lunch: Hermione Granger had been possessed and forced to kill people under the orders of a cursed diary. Professor Snape had discovered the girl trying to escape in the Forbidden forest, where she used to go to Imperius Acromantulas to do the dirty job for her. Some of Macmillan's objects were found in the girl's trunk, and with that the case was closed, and the ban on closing off the school would be over.

It didn't help, however, that the ministry would soon come around to bring Hermione to be trialed, and then if found guilty...she would end up in Azkaban with her wand snapped. Ron shivered at the thought of Hermione being sent into the worst possible prison of all, and last he heard Dumbledore was doing all that he could to prevent it, yet the families were out for blood, and they wanted it paid.

Hermione was under strict surveillance within the Infirmary of Hogwarts, kept under close watch to make sure nobody could enter or leave.

It was as lunch gave way to dinner, that Harry Scamander walked into the hall with his hair standing to attention and a bright red color.

"That was really funny guys, really funny." He snapped comically as he sat down at the Ravenclaw's table, eliciting the snickers of some older years. "What's the occasion?"

"We thought we should start teaching you that you can sleep in your own bed, Scamander!" One of them exclaimed loud enough for Ron to hear. The exclamation made the red haired boy narrow his eyes as he looked at Harry with an analyzing gleam. The boy had sleep bags beneath his eyes, and he hadn't slept in his room the night before?

What if...what if he had been the one to do everything, and give the fault to Hermione to wash his hands clean? He was working together with Snape to do it then! Of course it was clear it had to be him: Hermione would never, ever, do something like that. They had to be the culprits: Snape provided the Imperius and Harry provided the beast of Salazar.

It was clear. It had to be them. Now if only he could find a way...

Draco

His parents would be coming to school that day, to take care of the muggleborn girl: Granger. She had tried to enter the club once, but had failed and apparently with good enough reason. She had tried to frame Harry for it, she had tried to divide Slytherin and the rest of the houses from uniting under the banner of the King, and as his eyes scanned the other students at the table, he smirked. He had been right all along: even now students were ashamedly admitting they had thought the real Heir of Salazar not to be a Ravenclaw, but now...now that they realized they had believe into a muggleborn Gryffindor...

Everything was turning around. Now that people knew that the attacks and the deaths hadn't been staged by Harry, people flocked to those of the King's men to swear they had always believed in

them. He already had a list twice as big as the day before of students who wanted to help in bringing the Slytherin dorm back to their normal state, and the chatter in the Hufflepuff table...well, that was something for another time.

He knew his parents had arrived when Dumbledore excused himself: from the owl his father had written to him, his mother would be there too. He just couldn't wait to meet with her.

As he quickly gulped down his pumpkin juice and breakfast, he gave a gaze to where Harry was. Why did the boy appear contrite now? It was as if something wrong had happened, but it didn't matter much at the moment: he'd ask him later, since they'd probably have a club meeting to discuss the latest events. Maybe he should free his schedule too...

Somewhere

"Let me out of here!" The sorting hat yelled, while wobbling from spot to spot, chained down by a thick metallic chain.

"Now, now. None of that." The Voice remarked. "After all the trouble I went through to get you."

"Listen here, I've got nothing to say to you! Get me back at Hogwarts you hat-stealer!"

"Stealer? I stole nothing. I'm a reclaimer." The Voice pointed out with a dry chuckle, "And you...you belong to me."

Author's notes

And another chapter rolls by.

Indeed. Hermione was the Big Bad Guy...but is it really that? There is still a little bit of stuff that needs to be revealed before the complete 'painting' of the situation can be done. If you only stop at what you see, you'll need to wait for the next book to get the hang of it completely.

(of course, there **ARE** more chapters of this school year, but the worst has passed...one may hope.)

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 20

Harry looked satisfied at the results of hard work, stern discipline and good old stubbornness. The Slytherin's official dormitories were now clean, useable and perfectly able to contain the entirety of the house of the snakes. The House Elves were contacted only for the last part: to transfer the luggage of those who actually wished to make the change of 'residence' from the dungeons to the tower. Strangely very few refused it. Having windows, for once, was a really welcomed change. The Hufflepuff dormitories could be put on hold, considering there wasn't actually a stressful reason to start working on them, and as such Harry filed it on a thing to do in the future.

Still, he was glad everything had turned out fine. The chamber of secrets now held, instead of a Basilisk, a thrilling phoenix who actually enjoyed being able to flap her wings around. The murders would be over, and the King's men club would get a boon in applicants soon. They had subconsciously believed him to be the one staging the deaths, and that he would use such means to harness more applicants: yet now that the threat had been proven not staged by him, he had risen as a true defender of school unity against all odds. That a Gryffindor was being considered the primary suspect, when said house had been the one to accuse him the most, just showed how much more innocent he was.

There is no better way of winning, than to make the enemy fool himself. Point being had Harry consciously done anything of the sort then indeed he could claim the praise for this 'diabolical' plot. Problem being he didn't. It had all happened like that, naturally. He had just been in the right moment at the right time and doing the right thing. The only question that remained was just how professor Snape was going to get him out of Hogwarts now. Sure, the Aurors had left, but the security had tightened noticeably. Somehow a paranoid Albus wasn't a good sight to be seen.

The House Elves of the kitchen had been moved into specific points in the various halls, and they had been all too grateful to get to work even more. It felt strange walking and being called 'Sir' by a suit of armor or similar spot where an elf hid every five minutes, but still it was probably all that the Headmaster could do, considering the

portraits were refusing to even be in the same room or hallway as him.

Harry took a deep breath, as he began to clasp hands with the Slytherin pouring into their new common room and from there to their dormitories. Professor Snape was holding his face in a tight small smirk, and as he saw the last of the 'volunteers' for transfer within, he finally commented.

"I feel I should assign points to all houses, but that would pretty much be against the point your club is trying to make, isn't it, Mr. Scamander? Thus I award fifty points to Hogwarts: well done."

The cheerful chorus was met with a following off of food offered from the kitchens and a small party, some Slytherins went as far as hugging Harry claiming that finally they had windows! The week-end passed in that way with ease, and finally as December moved into the middle days, and the Dueling Club began being led by Gilderoy Lockhart on the seventeenth of said month.

On that day, the King's men stood at attention at the entrance of the room of requirements. The original first seven members watched him with trepidation, as he walked the three needed time in front of the hallway's stone wall. They watched as a door opened from the very stone bricks of the wall. They followed Harry, as he strode in with his robes billowing behind him.

Harry's gaze was settled on the room and how it had changed. He had wanted the Founder's room to be a place only for the original seven, those who had believed in him from the very beginning, and yet now that more wanted in, he had to come up with a different meeting room.

Justin whistled his appreciation, as both Tracey and Ginny held their breath sharply. Draco had his mouth open in disbelief as Hannah made a small exclamation of shock. Kevin Entwhistle clutched tightly on his book bag in shock as Seamus Finnigan merely pointed out loud while sharing the opinion of the rest of them.

"Merlin's beard: it's frigging huge!"

The archway of the room had grown to epic proportions, with towering shelves of books piled upon multiple floors. The first floor

was covered in sophisticated renditions of the golden H of Hogwarts tiled together with white and black marbles that clacked and made the sound propagate throughout the rest of the giant room.

A set of luscious silk drapes showcasing the very same H of Hogwarts stood at specific intervals from one shelf to another, their inner color a somber black which contrasted tastefully with the golden symbol of Hogwarts. Columns etched with the images of slithering dragons held the ceiling atop their heads, as at the dead center of the room stood a dozen of chairs with a long table at the other end. Suits of armor were holding upon halberds as if to act as royal guards at the entrance of the room, and a narrow red carpet led them through the room, towards the chairs.

In the center of the table, that stood opposite to the many chairs, was differently from the other chairs, a throne of black obsidian with the letters S, G, R and H inscribed on it in gold and encircled in a silver lining. It was with a slight fright, that Harry took the first step inside. Immediately he recoiled together with the others, as the suits of armor raised their weapons to attention.

"All Hail Harry Scamander, of the noble house of Scamander! Blood of the noble house of Potter, protégé of the noble houses of Slytherin, Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff!" A metallic voice echoed through the room as he looked around in fright.

"Bollocks!" Tracey exclaimed. "Move it King, I want a turn too!"

As Harry moved forward, the girl walked soon after him.

"All Hail Tracey Davis!"

"What? Only that?" The girl deflated, leaving the spot to Draco who gingerly walked through it.

"All Hail Draco Malfoy, of the noble house of Malfoy! Blood of the noble house of Malfoy!"

"Hah! Take that!" He puffed his chest up, "I like this room more and more!"

"Yeah right." Seamus retorted, walking through as the armors chanted his name. So they kept on going, until the last one through

was Ginny. Finally, with all of them through the suits, they began to look through the room's nooks and crannies. Justin was the first to find something, soon followed by Seamus.

"Hey: there's a map of Hogwarts here too!" The two boys exclaimed, pointing at a coat of arms on the wall to the side of the table, "It's got all the members of the club that move through Hogwarts!"

Harry smiled at the sight as his hand just so carefully traced the wooden surface of the table. He just wondered how this magic worked, to create such grandiosity at apparently no price. It had to be wrong. Everything had to hold a price of sort, this...all of this...it was strange and awe inspiring. An entire titanic room created by the will of anyone who would take three small walks in front of a wall. Just what were the limits of magic? Was this...this wonder, only peculiar to Hogwarts? Was this why the castle was considered the most famous, or was it the power of the four founders within it?

"Ehi King!" Tracey pointed out from the floor above them, "There's something you have to see up here!" Harry obliged the girl, expecting a book or something like that. He hadn't expected a collection of suits of armors and weapons, hidden behind glass panels. Furthermore, he hadn't expected specific armors or famous weapons.

"Wait. Is that really the axe of Gengis Khan?" Ginny muttered pointing at a ferociously, but crude looking, axe placed on a golden holder. Next to it was a roman shield, apparently used by Caesar himself, together with his Gladius. In another corner, a round shield with different colors and a stocky sword claimed to have been weapons of King Arthur, just like the Roman-looking armor claiming to be his by the tags written beneath it. Yet the sword was not Excalibur. Not that it would have mattered anyhow: it wasn't as if they needed weapons after all.

"They must be self-updating tags." Hannah muttered, "I mean: it's not as if we can read Celtic now, right? So..."

"Translation spells?" Tracey raised an eyebrow, but then nodded slowly. "Possible. Highly possible."

"Elementary, Watson." Kevin remarked monotonously, parroting Tracey as the Ravenclaw's hands grabbed a tome from the shelves

to peruse it. "Seems authentic! This here is the Hamlet...anyone care to guess how a muggle book found its way here?"

"When in doubt, give the fault to magic!" Harry said back, as he subconsciously touched the ring of Salazar in his left index hand. The pocket watch was safely tucked away within his invisible cloak, just like the locket was instead placed around his neck. He felt at ease at having those tools with him, and while he had no idea what the locket or the ring could do of more, he was pretty much certain he'd find out with time.

Spending time with Sophie also helped to soothe his nerves, and his bouts of anger and rage had practically subsided. The medicine Draco had provided him, furthermore, worked wonders to make him sleep easily. He had to remember to get Draco a gift of sorts this Christmas. Thinking about Draco, Harry turned around to search for the boy. He finally found him staring with his nose up in the air. Curious, he did the same.

The archway terminated in an ample oval shaped clearing upon which someone had painted deliciously a battle being waged. On one side a mighty dragon stood blaring fire upon a horde of armed men, while on the other side a group of wizards fought thousands upon thousands of goblins. There was no other way to put it, except that the painting was both terrifically haunting and marvelous at the same time...coupled with a hint of nostalgia.

Harry's face scrunched up in surprise. Why did it seem a familiar thing to see? It was just that, a fresco on the ceiling: nothing more. Yet his hand was itching for his wand to cast that pretty green flame that one of the four wizards up in the painted battle was doing. He thrilled upon the sight of the burning flesh of the enemies, and...and he took a deep breath, and calmed down.

Everything was good. The Crucio had done its course, he wasn't suffering, and everything was fine. He could actually enjoy his club and have a normal last year at Hogwarts, of that he was sure.

"Hey, I was thinking." Draco began. "The Dueling Club is training a few in the dueling skills. Shouldn't we be doing the same?"

"Why?" Hannah asked quietly, "The problem is gone right? Granger was caught and everything is fine now."

"She's being processed right now, and you can't be that thick: come on, it's clear she was being possessed!" Draco exclaimed. "Did you read the daily prophet? She claims she doesn't remember a thing."

"Which is an excuse you know well, don't you Malfoy?" Seamus said with a snicker, only to stop as a hand slapped itself down on the nearby table. Harry looked at Seamus with narrowed eyes, and hissed.

"No background insults. No house insults. No racial insults. We are equals."

Seamus' eyes fell pretty quickly, as Draco gulped down nervously, before continuing slowly.

"Yeah, I suppose I do..." He muttered, "Anyway, we all know that whoever did this to the Granger girl is still at large, right? If You-Know-Who had a possession diary, what if there's another one? What if there is more than one of such things? Shouldn't we at least be ready to fight them?"

"Why should we?" Hannah asked hesitantly, "I mean...there are Aurors for the job."

"Better to prevent than to cure." Kevin quoted wistfully, "If, let's say hypothetically, there indeed was a need to learn, then we should be off to the dueling club, right? Aren't they doing a lesson right now?"

"Completely useless with Lockhart in there," Tracey snorted. "I can't believe there are people who read his stuff."

"For a Fantasy writer he's good, at least." Kevin replied, "As long as you take all he writes as a story of course."

"You think they're really going to get the Granger girl to Azkaban?" Ginny asked carefully, "She was friends with my brother Ron and Lillian."

"Sorry." Seamus heartedly said, "I know it's tough but it's like that now. Ministry does what makes it look good, not what it should."

"It's still unfair." Ginny murmured, "It's not like she had any fault in it, right?" Hesitantly, they all convened at the table back down at the first floor. Harry tapped on the wooden surface of the table, before replying with a low murmur.

"Life is not fair: but what can we do now? Nothing. We're barely scraping the surface of the problem. Maybe in years, maybe, we could get her out...maybe she could have had an honest process in ten years, maybe in twenty or thirty...but now? Now she won't." He murmured. "If you think this is wrong, then you are right. If you think this has to change, then you are right. Never let anyone else tell you differently..." He took a deep breath.

"She will be judged on Christmas, right?" He asked to Draco, who merely nodded.

"Then there's nothing we can do. The Daily prophet has her already in the Azkaban holding cells...she's as good as taken."

"Dumbledore will fight against it!" Ginny yelled, with far more...fright, than usual.

"Why would he?" Harry replied. "It helps his case better if he can guilt trip others into following him. Oh yes," he began imitating the sound of Albus' voice, "I knew Miss. Granger, a wonderful student, Muggleborn you see but great...yet the ministry accused her and she fell to the Dementors, mad and kissed and gone...we must fight so that she may be remembered as a martyr to our cause...the cause of the greater good!"

There was silence for a while, before Kevin narrowed his eyes.

"You have a bone to pick with Dumbledore, right?" He asked hesitantly.

"Did he do something to you?" Draco queried worriedly, "You know I can write to my father: he's on the board of the governors and..."

Harry chuckled and shook his head slowly.

"No. Nothing we can do now will ever help..." He wistfully began to look around the giant room, "better to wait and see...you do not tickle a sleeping dragon. You wait and behead him before he can

awaken." He added carefully. "We're recruiting, but the difference between recruiting en masse and single handedly is a matter of trust. I can trust you, because you came to me first, when there was nothing to gain apparently. You risked with me, and with me you won." He mused, "The problem is: what of the others? Would they follow or would they dare betray?"

"The...Dark Lord had an inner circle and an outer circle." Draco explained slowly, "With large organizations, it's always a matter of who you can trust and who you can't...and so..."

"That would clearly go a long way." Tracy ironically muttered, "Hey guys, we're the inner circle but no, we don't want to start a dark army."

"All must be treated equally." Harry said out loud, "Yet some are more equal than others." He chuckled "George Orwell got the problem right. How do you lead others by claiming all are the same, if you can't have an opposite view? How do you bring all to follow the right path, while the easy one would be what majority prefers? And who can claim what the right path is, and that the easy path is actually easy?"

"So what do we do?" Kevin asked. "We accept them all?"

"Of course we do." Harry grinned back. "We need not tell others there's an inner circle after all now, do we?" He winked. "All we have to do is claim one thing and do another. We can keep on meeting in the Founder's room, and as long as nobody talks, everything is bound to be fine."

"But what if one of us talks?" Hannah said, "I mean, I'm good friends with Susan, and I can hardly keep something secret from her when she..."

"Do you value your life?" Harry merely spoke back quietly, silencing the teen as everyone else paled at the same time while looking at him. "Because, do not mistake me...we are not talking of merely a breach of the club's security. I said there would be no unbreakable vows required, and what I say remains true: you can leave the club at any moment, nobody will stop you...and you won't die. Hogwarts however won't be that lenient."

"W-What?" She squeaked out.

"Hogwarts has looked at those who have signed. Should you decide to...leave, then you are welcomed to, but should you decide to stay and...betray, then I'm afraid Hogwarts will not take kindly to it."

"And when were you planning on telling us this, Harry?" Draco asked with more curiosity than anger.

"Well, I found out...five seconds ago?" He retorted hotly, "Apparently the four founders decided it would be good and nice to make sure none would get the upper hand on the other during the construction of the school. So the Architect is there to ensure 'equity' is met. If you don't meet 'equity' or 'honesty' if you rather prefer that term, then the punishment is doled out by the school. I suppose it means you might end up with a rather drafty room for a series of nights or a trip to the infirmary..."

"Yeah, nice and all but...how the hell do you know that now!?" Draco insisted as the others looked at him as if he had grown a second head.

"Oh." Harry blinked, before looking at both his locket's chain and his ring. "One of these two has to be it I suppose."

"Has to be what?" Tracey asked, not actually wanting to know the answer to her question.

"I think Salazar wanted someone to know how Hogwarts worked, in the event he couldn't be there to explain it to his successor." Harry intoned quietly as he finally realized memories were being fed to him, "So he held a series of rings: all contained some information on something of his life, and he infused them also in his personal objects...Oh so that's why I'm remembering stuff of the founders' era!" He exclaimed far louder and excitedly. "Basically, the ring I recovered from the locket that my mother gifted me," since that was the lie after all, "tells me about Hogwarts' functions...now that's neat!"

"Oh." Ginny muttered, "Must be...nice?"

"Nice? You're telling me you've got two objects that belonged to Salazar on your person!?" Draco and Tracey yelled at the same time.

"Bloody hell!" They both said together, before looking at one another with a hint of annoyance in their eyes.

"No doubts ya are the heir of Slytherin with that..." Seamus muttered, "And...well...Hell who am I to say I don't feel angry about it? You didn't know then and ya know now, and it's pretty of you to tell us the way out of it but...I'm not going to betray ya for this little so it's fine for me." The Irish boy shrugged.

"Binding contracts are normalcy in pureblood society." Draco deadpanned. "And I'm not going to cry over spilled milk: not when this one is the loosest type of contract I have ever seen."

"I'll have to agree with him." Kevin remarked, "I mean, some contracts are pretty damn bad and wrong, but this? Heck, if you want out just go and tell it to the statue I suppose."

In the end, nobody left and it was decided that after the Christmas vacations, they would begin inviting people into the 'club' and have their first meeting. Till then...time passed. Caught in the twirl of time, Harry found himself waking up on the twenty-fifth of December, with his bed crammed with stuff. Somehow people believed in him now. It was kind of a surprise to see gift cards and happy Christmas notes in front of his bed. The Slytherin were especially prolific and quite a few offered 'to meet him under the mistletoe' all the time he wanted.

Being the Heir of Slytherin was probably granting also this type of benefit...not that he cared much about that at the present. He wouldn't probably be seeing anyone else anytime soon. He'd leave Hogwarts at the end of the school year. He was set on that. Maybe he'd even cry a bit, but in the end any other place was better than this. It was with dread that he opened up his 'mother's' gift. Quietly, the parchment gave away to display...a cup.

He was holding a cup.

A cup with a nice pretty emblem of Hufflepuff, but still a cup...and this was starting to turn strange, because the message his mother sent him was mostly wrong in its intended effects.

"To my loveable son who is too busy to write enough to his mother," Harry groaned. He had written to his mother. Thrice a week he would write useless and worthless stuff that would get the woman

out of his hair, wasn't it enough? What did she want, a daily correspondence? "I am pleased the murderer has been found and it is, of course, a lurid wench of a mudblood. I will personally oversee you have the most wonderful Christmas ever, since you have decided to remain at the castle to foster your connections with those who remained. I am sure I will be pleased of whatever gift you have instead decided to gift me, but I do hope it is something with taste and not Muggle made.

With love and a tight hug, your mother.

Ps: the cup is cursed: anything poured in it and then served is poisonous and will most likely kill the drinker with extremely excruciating bouts of pain. Fun, isn't it?"

Of course it was 'fun', if the definition had suddenly changed to something far more on the dark side. He carefully slid the cup deep within his trunk and forgot it there. He grabbed the usual bags of sweet and was surprised when he came up with a parchment. A strange looking parchment that held a note pinned to it, and that appeared a lot old.

"This is the 'Marauders' map. I solemnly swear that I am up to no good: those are the words to pronounce for the map to activate. I would like for you to keep this hidden and safeguarded, never reveal it to anyone! I hope it may help you in your escape...

Sincerely, a friend."

The writing was clearly feminine, and yet Harry couldn't help but be suspicious of the parchment. Maybe it was the paranoia of post-Diary possession, but out of the gifts...he rather preferred that of his mother: at least he knew that one to be dangerous and that had to be tastefully destroyed somehow. Just like his mother Petunia did with the gifts of Aunt Marge: somehow they always met their demise in the trash can. By chance of course, the fault always had to end up with an accident while cleaning.

Harry groaned as he filled his trunk: the cup at the bottom together with the map. Then he closed his trunk and trudged out of there. He didn't spare a glance at the portrait of Helena, who did try her best to get his attention however. How could he trust the ghosts, when he had no idea who had spoken to Quirrell?

The funny thing was that someone had told the mad vampire-possessed-muggle studies professor about his escape plan for Heather, and whoever had was going to pay. The only ones who knew were however either Henry or Helena. There couldn't have been anyone else...oh and professor Snape. Yet the man had nearly died twice in carrying him through the forest: it was simply impossible for him to be the culprit of the staged ambushes.

Unless he had some sort of suicidal streak or it had all been carefully planned. Harry sighed as his hands carefully clasped the invisibility cloak beneath his invisible cloak. It seemed stupid, but as long as the invisible one stood above, then he was not invisible at all. It had to be the opposite for it to actually work, and while he admitted keeping the cloak at hand was handy, he also rather preferred not to show around in an invisibility cloak.

The common room of Ravenclaw was packed with students exchanging words and some of the older ones apparently drinking eggnog, whatever it was. Basileus was holding thoughtfully on a half torn teddy bear, looking at it in a corner and lost in great thoughts, probably the likes of which he wouldn't understand. Still the teddy did seem familiar.

"Happy Christmas!" A few Ravenclaws exclaimed, seeing him coming down from the dormitories. "Filled with gifts?"

"Yeah." He replied awkwardly, as he began to walk towards Basileus, who merely shrugged as if having reached a conclusion with the teddy bear, and then cast a repairing charm on it, returning it to full functionality.

"Harry." Basileus smiled, "Is everything all right?"

"I've got the marauders map." He blurted out with a slightly low voice, "You know anything about it?" As soon as he asked, the red haired teen blinked twice, before shaking his head and stalling for a few seconds.

"What would...the map do?"

"I haven't yet tried it." Harry replied, "I thought you had sent it...it was signed 'a friend'."

Basileus raised an eyebrow. "Why would I?"

"I don't know." He shuffled on his feet for a moment, "so you didn't send it?"

"No, I did not." The older teen replied. "However I must say you work pretty well for a second year. Already got yourself a firsty, eh?" As the Ravenclaw prefect winked at him, Harry owlshly blinked back. What was the boy talking about now?

"Ehm..."

"Miss Lovegood Luna is the reason I managed to save you in time." He replied in a low hushed whisper. "I do think she's a seer...she does possess rather insightful knowledge after all."

"Oh..." Harry blinked, the blond haired girl who seemed to live in fantasy land? Oh yes. He nodded quietly, "I'll thank her then...do you think she knows anything more then?"

Basileus shrugged, "Doesn't matter. Nobody believes the madmen even when they're true."

Harry sighed, and then meekly waved goodbye to the strange teen he had stopped trying to make head from tails of. He finally managed to walk into the common dining hall, when a sharp female voice interrupted his musings on where to seat.

"Harry! I'm over here!" The chirping, warm and clearly motherly voice of Bellatrix Scamander came to attack his ears as if a truck had passed over him. Christmas was a time to spend in happiness and bliss with an overdose of chocolate. It wasn't a time to spend with a psychopathic madwoman who would punish you for the slightest of errors. Yet that wasn't the most dreadful thing. The most dreadful thing was that at the single common table, Ginny Weasley, 'blood-traitor' and the rest of the muggle-born or half-blood members of the King's army were looking at him with anticipation.

He was screwed.

He was so royally screwed the only way to save himself would be to run out of Hogwarts in that instant. If only Draco had been there he

could have tried to explain the situation beforehand, but without him...he had no choice, the woman was merrily chirping his name and inviting him to sit closer to him. With slow hesitant steps, he took his spot next to her and...on the other side stood Ginny Weasley. The red haired girl was keeping her cool while buttering up a piece of toast, trying to look as much refined as possible while her brother, standing on the other side of the table, was instead eating as if his life depended on it.

Seamus was talking with Justin and ignoring him too, so maybe, just maybe, he had a chance as long as Tracey and Hannah didn't do anything like talk to him when they came down for breakfast. At the professors' tables, Snape was watching him like a hawk while Albus was merely 'twinkling' his eyes at the display of 'motherly' love.

"My darling son, I missed you so much!" Bellatrix chirped hugging him as he sat down, "I'm going to stay only until lunch: I've got lots of things to do today and the days to come after all." She tussled his hair affectionately, "Now tell me everything you didn't tell me in your letters. How is the school? Are the teachers treating you with the respect you deserve? Have you made any useful connections? Are your friends all purebloods?" He nearly gagged at that, sending distraught glances to his side and strangely wondering why nobody was looking back at him. Did the woman already do something?

"School is fine now, mother." He replied as politely as he could muster his tone, "The murderer has been apprehended, and the teachers are all very respectful." He hoped to Merlin that whatever 'Notice-me-not' charm that was on the two of them would keep on working till the end of their conversation. "I've got a lot of friends, mother: all from respectable families..." Bellatrix frowned. Harry subconsciously tightened his grip on his cup. That wasn't a good thing. He was going to get punished and he didn't want to be punished, "And all purebloods of course." The woman smiled normally back: he was safe. The 'sweetly' smile was made before the punishments. The normal smile meant he was safe.

He was starting to get the hang of it; maybe his Christmas could pass by without accidents this time around. As his thought drifted on the chance of having a normal holiday, it was then that the doors swung open, and a crew of Aurors followed another man inside. The man, as the whispers came around them, was none other than the prime minister for magic Cornelius Fudge.

Albus stood up, and it was then and only then, that the feeling of dread within his stomach intensified.

"Headmaster: please deliver to us all scholastic information pertaining Miss Granger. She had her wand snapped this morning," gasps echoed through the hall, "And she is bound to suffer the Damnatio Memoriae from Hogwarts. She is furthermore imprisoned in Azkaban at the medium security level, and she will stay there to serve a life sentence for the deaths of Mr. Colin Creevey and Mr. Ernest Macmillan. You may warn the families of the victims that justice has been meted." Then the minister gestured for the aurors to move and follow the Headmaster, while he himself...walked over to where Bellatrix was and sat down ahead of her.

"Bellatrix...what a surprise to see you here." Fudge said with a bright smile.

"Oh...my little Fudgey." Bellatrix cooed back.

Harry didn't blink this time.

No, he did not blink. He merely realized that he had it all wrong. Nazis were in the government too, and apparently, his 'mother' was having a fling with the minister. There was no 'right' side. There were the Nazis and there were the Fascists with Dumbledore...and there wasn't another faction.

It was...

No. He refused to believe anyone would fall for Bellatrix knowing what kind of woman she was.

"Oh...is this your son?" Fudge asked, suddenly turning a bit more serious at seeing him, "Well...I'm afraid I'll have to cut it close since I have to show the example to the younger generation of what duty is." He pompously exclaimed as he stood back up and left, trying his best to put his chest up in the air as he did so.

It was then that Harry saw Bellatrix smile morph from 'normal' to 'sweetly' so...and he knew that, deep down, he was going to be punished before the day was over.

Author's notes

And Hermione gets the axe. Yet...somebody stole the marauder map from Lillian with the Obliviate, and handed it over? Curiosity is female apparently. And Fudge with Bellatrix? What is the world going to become!?

I believe that the Room of Requirement is severely undervalued. As is the rest of the magic of Hogwarts. Really. Nobody remembers the talking doors or the scratch the handle to make the door open things...

Of course now that it turns out Harry is the real heir things are changing...and 'of course' things are just going to get worse.

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 21

"So tell me about your grades." Bellatrix cooed nicely, as the two walked through the hallways in the direction of the dungeons. Harry shivered lightly at the thought of actually having to tell the woman anything about his grades. Education didn't seem important when you had to fight off the desire to murder idiots or to face impending doom at the hands of a psychopathic woman. It was better than before, however: even though it was now pretty clear he would be punished in the future, he could still hope at present not to suffer too much if he managed to placate her.

Hope is the last thing that dies, after all. Bellatrix' heels clicked and clacked on the stone surface of the castle, as she had grabbed by the arm Harry as if she didn't trust him to stay instead of running away. Her trust was of course well placed; still if he could manage to keep her busy until lunch, then maybe he would get off lightly. He doubted she would take more of her time to punish him after all.

"They're good." Harry replied with a bit of hesitation, his eyes scanning the walls for doors he could barge in if the need arose. "I'm doing well in History, Charms and Transfiguration."

"Only?" Bellatrix asked. She raised an eyebrow as her face took on a slightly perplexed face. "What about the other? You know second year is important Harry...you need to carefully think about your electives for third year." She spoke seriously, for once, acting just like a normal caring mother would. If only she was actually one then maybe he wouldn't have to make his great escape at the end of the year.

"I was thinking about ancient runes, care of magical creatures and magical theory...maybe elemental magic too." Harry admitted, "I know earth magic is taught as an extracurricular subject, and probably Ghouls studies?"

"Oh, so you've been thinking about it! My little darling is such a serious student!" Bellatrix cooed, hugging him tightly as she ruffled his hair, "I just know you're going to excel in it. Keep it up and..."

Bellatrix stilled, before turning her head to the side, where the Flying professor was snickering with his back against the wall. "Oh my dear cousin Bellatrix, I never thought I would see the day of you turning into a smothering hen." The black haired man looked kind of horrible. His eyes seemed haunted and he had apparently just recently shaved.

"Sirius." Bellatrix coolly spoke, but she did tighten her grip on Harry, slowly moving him slightly behind her, as if the woman was kind of afraid the black haired flying professor would do something to him.

"That's my name." The man replied while moving his eyebrows up and down. "I'm Sirius Black, head of the noble house Black and I'd like a word with Harry if you would please..."

"No." Bellatrix reply was stern, harsh and...Harry found it held also a noticeable amount of fright. "He's my son and you won't be even in the same room with him unless I'm too." Harry gritted his teeth in silence, as the nails of his 'mother' were apparently digging into his clothes.

"It will only take a moment, Bellatrix." Sirius replied slowly, "And there's nothing to..."

"Don't you dare say that to me..." The woman hissed back, "What do you want with him? Talk or get the hell out of my sight."

Sirius clenched his fists slightly, before answering quietly.

"There are rumors he was out on the night Miss Granger was caught...if he saw anything that could help during her appeal..." Sirius hesitated, especially when Harry realized it was because of his mother's glare. The gaze was positively murderous, and as he felt the grip tighten even more against his arm, he realized his 'mother' was scared out of her wits. It was as if she believed Sirius to be some sort of monster in human clothing, or something like that.

"He saw nothing." She screeched back, "How many? How many times are you going to try and ruin my life Sirius? He saw nothing and knows nothing! Leave him alone!" And then she pushed him alongside her to walk away from the man.

"Bellatrix!" The man yelled at their back, but he preferred not to stop. He didn't know why the woman seemed so scared out of her wits, but he knew better than to ask. All that he knew was to follow her away and into one of the many abandoned rooms within the dungeons. He kind of suspected that the number of students at Hogwarts had dwindled down over the decades, and because of that a lot of classrooms had been left in disuse.

Bellatrix had barely closed the door behind her that Harry began to tremble. There was no way out now. Unless some sort of miracle came he'd probably be punished in the next few minutes. He wasn't surprised when the woman turned around and hugged the light out of him; it was usually what came before a punishment. He was instead surprised when she did not release the hug and began singing a lullaby to him.

She was sniffing and sobbing, and rocking him to the right and the left as if he was a kid who had to be sung to sleep. He embarrassedly gave back the hug, because he didn't know what to do for once. Usually she would have already begun using the Crucio, but maybe this...this time she wouldn't? He knew better than to build up false hopes, but the small possibility was there, wasn't it?

"My little baby." She whispered, "All mine, only mine." She added slowly, "I won't let anyone take you away from me. Never...you're mine." She gently ruffled his hair before taking a deep breath, "No mudblood will have you and no-one will harm you...yes? You're my little Harry right? Right?" She asked again.

"Yes mom." He replied without blinking. How did one pour affection in a word actually? He didn't think it was something possible to do, especially not to psychiatric cases of woman who should stay confined in perfectly white cells.

"I love you so much!" She exhaled, hugging him even more tightly. So much that he had to forcefully push a bit in the opposite direction to breathe.

"Mom! I'm fine!" He exclaimed as the woman didn't appear to be of the idea of relenting and letting him go.

"Oh...Yes...of course." The older woman muttered, finally dropping the hug and producing a handkerchief from her sleeve, "My little

Harry, grown up and embarrassed from his mommy's hugs..." Then, carefully with eyes narrowed, the woman used the kerchief to swipe away a 'smudge' on the side of Harry's cheek. "You should always be proper Harry." She added with a knowing nod, before beaming a smile and flicking her wand out.

Harry paled. Bellatrix just smiled.

"Let's get comfortable and speak a bit, all right?" As a couple of chairs floated from the corner of the classroom near them, and the woman sat down while patting the other chair so that he would follow her suite, Harry had a hard time controlling his heartbeat.

"Is there any pretty girl you like right now?" Bellatrix asked kindly, with a bit of a smile. "You're getting of age, so I suppose I should have a talk with you now before it's late and some harpy manages to sink her claws into you."

"The...talk?" Harry's skin couldn't have turned whiter and his fists couldn't have clenched tighter as, for the following hour, Bellatrix spoke of bees and birds...and Harry...he was trying, as hard as he could, to remove those mental images from his mind.

"And then the bee leaves the flower and a fruit is born nine months afterwards, and..."

Bleach. He needed bleach for his brain. Maybe an Obliviate. He'd actually volunteer for one.

"Now I have to ask...do you perhaps fancy that Weasley blood traitor?" Bellatrix asked kindly, interrupting her flow of words so much with the out of the blue question that all that Harry could reply was with a squeak.

"No...mom! What are you thinking!? Of course not!" He shook his head vividly and yet...yet the wand was pointed at his neck.

"You see Harry...I saw how you were looking at her at the table." He was just making sure they were actually ignoring him, he wasn't actually thinking about anything else! "And I know what's going on in your mind..." He was screwed, wasn't he?

"You're going through a normal phase, really." Bellatrix said normally, "It's the rebellious phase, I went through it too...I know what it can be like." And then, making a small smile, the woman added, "And my mother quelled it from me in the same way I am now going to do with you...Silencio!"

Harry's own instincts kicked in, and he jumped from the chair to the floor, rolling to avoid the spell that would have prevented him from screaming or casting. His wand was in his hand in the next second, but the flick of red light from Bellatrix' wand disarmed him.

"Severus taught you well then." Bellatrix cooed with a wink, and then she frowned. She was probably realizing just then that the wand had been hanging from the wand chain in his wrist, and as he quickly got his wand back, he pointed the tool to the woman.

"I am not going to be punished any longer mother!" He hissed with a strangled cry.

"Yes." Bellatrix replied with a warm smile. "You're just like your mother...and you don't know how proud I am of you now...really, I've got tears in my eye from the joy!" Yet in that moment of hesitation, the woman's wand pointed at him with a flick he knew all too well.

The Crucio's pain was not always the same. Sometimes it was stronger, others it was weaker, it all depended on the will to make a target suffer through torture, and depending on what one viewed as the worst type of pain, that too was incorporated within the effects of the Unforgivable in question. The spell had been cast without the use of the words, and yet it brought a pain that was a hundred times worse.

Maybe it had to do with Sophie healing his old wounds, or maybe it was just his mother angry at him for having tried to rebel, but Harry's screams didn't even manage to come out of his throat. He was frothing from his mouth as his hands clawed at his own face and chest while his mind's only thoughts went to the pain and how it had to stop, it had to stop.

He didn't know when his bowels left him or when his mother finally stopped using the spell to punish him and cleaned him up with yet

another spell. All that he knew was that he felt defiled, broken, and left in a corner hurling and retching while his mother was standing tall above him with her usual bitchy smile.

"Merry Christmas Harry..." She then kneeled down, cleaning the puke with her wand, and gave him a kiss on the forehead that was sweating just like the rest of his body. "Wash your face later, all right?" She added with a smile, leaving her handkerchief behind by dropping it on his crying red face.

He heard the door click open and close behind him, and he knew that his mother had thankfully left. Grateful of that respite, he fell asleep within moments on the cold stone floor. It was for the best after all. Really, if he slept all the pain would go away, and he could dream back to his normal happy life with the Dursley. He remembered the Christmas mornings with his family, opening gifts and eating the Christmas luncheon and dinner. He felt...He felt nostalgic at the thought...

Why couldn't he go back to those happy times? Why couldn't he go back to thinking magic awesome and cool and useful? Why...why did he feel like somehow, somewhere, a part of him had died ever so slowly, only to be replaced by a cold, harsh and bitter side that only wanted magic for destruction and revenge?

His dreams brought him to look at the lake of Hogwarts, and then at the depths of the Forbidden forest. They brought him into a dusty and filled with cobwebs crypt, filled with strange symbols of crosses and golden crucifixes, and then they flew him all the way to the depth bowels of the Kremlin, where among blood and howls of pains monstrosities awaited their time. He was in the pretty castle of Versailles, walking through the hedgerows as the fires loomed upon the revolution that brought down a kingdom...the Bastilles stood menacingly in front of him, and yet he did not stop his dreams there.

He reached a hand for a strange staff of blackened thorns and alabaster, settled upon a cold stone throne that seemed to be giving way to a harsh rumbling ocean which held beneath its surface archways made of green mossy stones that yet shone like emeralds.

Finally, Harry woke up with a startled gasp. It was night and he was shivering in the unused classroom, and yet as he hesitantly stepped on his feet, and then out of the room...he felt like he had a mission

to do. Like...something was calling on to him, as if the deepest part of him that had been hidden had finally come out. He knew what he had to do.

For he was Salazar Slytherin, greatest of the Hogwarts four!

He blinked, hurriedly shaking his head as he muttered word after word.

"I'm Harry. Harry. I'm Harry." He hissed to the voice in his head that he was Harry and only Harry. He moaned his name to the stairways and the doors and finally, just as he was about to reach for the Ravenclaw door, he gave way to yet another bout of restful sleep.

Draco Malfoy

"Draco dear, come here would you?" His mother called him from the side of the library where she was engrossed in a book, and as he dropped his own homework to reach for her, he sincerely hoped Harry was having a good Christmas just like his.

"Yes Mother?" He asked carefully.

"Do you think your friend Harry would like coming to the New Year party at the Ministry of Magic together with us?" Draco frowned slightly. He didn't see anything wrong with it, but he did kind of wonder why he couldn't just go with his aunt...Sure, maybe she punished him a bit, but it wasn't that bad right? It wasn't as if he was being daily subjected to the Crucio or another curse like that: no-one would remain sane for long under such a regime.

"I think he'd like that." Draco replied carefully. "You should ask his mother right?"

"I'd rather not." Narcissa answered quickly, "Listen Draco...your aunt isn't actually a...good influence." The last words came out hesitantly as the blond woman spoke again, "She...she suffered a lot during the war and lost a lot: Azkaban didn't actually help her."

"Is Harry in danger?"

"I hope not." Narcissa huffed, "He's going to be fine, but you must realize that I wouldn't leave you alone in the same room with

Bellatrix even if I was forced by the Imperius: she's not safe to hang around."

"Maybe we should have invited him over for the holidays? He's my cousin now isn't he?"

Narcissa bit her lip, before whispering back.

"I'm afraid it would have had the opposite effect. Bellatrix has always been possessive of her things, and she was insanely jealous of her husband when he was still alive. Trust me: she would have assaulted our wards or practically set camp in our house for as long as Harry stayed with us...she'd need help, but she doesn't even want to speak with a professional to begin with."

Draco's face scrunched up before paling.

"Mom...I...I think she's using the Crucio curse on Harry."

The woman looked saddened, but merely made a slow nodding gesture.

"It was our mother's favorite way to punish her Draco." She began, "It completely possible she is doing the same with her son."

"We've got to call the ministry!" The blond haired boy exclaimed, "We can't let her get away with it!"

Narcissa smiled at his display of friendship, but shook her head gently.

"Language Draco." She clipped quickly, "And I'm afraid there is nothing we can do." She added softly "You know of our guest, right?"

"You mean Lord Gaunt?" He asked back hesitantly. He had met the man only a few times at dinner, a business associate of his father of sorts. He didn't seem a bad person at all: at least, from the few words he had understood from him. Dark haired and dark eyes, with a history of pureblood ancestors that rivaled that of the Malfoys...

"Indeed." Narcissa nodded, "He is going to try for the Minister of Magic position at the end of the year, but in order to do so and

remove the favored candidates endorsed by Dumbledore he needs to make the man's reputation crumble."

"What does Harry have to do with all of this?" Draco asked back cautiously.

"With him being officially the heir of Slytherin, and him being under the protection of Hogwarts...if...no," she shook her head once more, "You're too young to know. I hope you remember our family motto."

"Purity will always conquer?" Draco asked in a low murmur, his voice filled with disbelief. What was his mother talking about?

Narcissa smiled kindly at him, "I don't want to ruin your holidays, Draco. How about we go and visit Diagon Alley to resupply your potion's kit? And then we can start working on Severus' assignments all right?"

"Mother..." He stilled at the gaze his mother sent him, and with a quick nod he turned to leave. He stopped only for a second, turning around as if to say something else, but Narcissa was faster.

"Draco." And with that curt admonishment, the discussion was closed.

Harry Scamander

He felt someone snuggling against his chest when he woke up. It clearly wasn't Sophia, because the phoenix would be far more bawling and making all sorts of noises rather than just quietly push her head against his chest. The feeling was good at least, and as he absentmindedly went along his instincts of petting the creature that was snuggling close to him, he realized that the movement had stopped.

"Oh." The owner of said voice hadn't probably thought he'd wake up, or that he'd start petting its head. As he blearily opened his eyes, he realized that the figure in question was the blond haired Ravenclaw student that he had met during his first night at Hogwarts. "Sorry." She actually blushed lightly, before running away as fast as she could.

He raised an eyebrow in surprise and began to look around. He was in the common room, on the sofa near the fire, and he was draped in a handmade blanket of wool he didn't think belonged to the room itself. He had to have fallen asleep after the night before. They were in the middle of March now, and things were going quite smoothly.

Lessons had taken their normalcy once more, and the castle was again ground to the normal activities. The murderer had really left, and with it albeit some Gryffindors were still sour over the real 'culprit' the rest of the students were happy and returned to their carefree status. The movement for Hogwarts unity that now was labeled a Political and Social Club with Harry as its leader held a good chunk of the Slytherin house, a way good number of Ravensclaws mixed with a few Hufflepuffs and, unluckily, a sheer minority of Gryffindors.

Of course one had to distinguish those who 'believed' in the movement from those who simply 'followed' because of peer pressure. Harry's 'inner circle' the King's Hands as they had decided to call themselves was screening all applicants to the club repeatedly, to make sure said distinction would be easy to make if there was a need for...some bit of dirty work, as Draco had suggested it.

The boy's thoughtfulness had struck him as positive. The day of Christmas his 'mother' had come to visit, nothing had happened because Draco, of all people, had warned the other members of her views and of her mental ailments. He hadn't said anything about her using Crucio of course, but it had still helped him survive...if the woman had known more, then who knew what she would have done, had she known he was friends with 'mudbloods' and 'blood traitors' and 'half-bloods'? For once, he didn't think he'd survive Christmas.

However the blond haired boy was actually starting to get nervous around him for some reason, and the more they got close to the end of the school term, the more he appeared on the verge of a nervous breakdown. The others instead were all smiles and cheers. They really believed in him, and his ability to bring change to Hogwarts...

It made him feel dirty inside, to think he would be abandoning them all at the end of the year. It made him feel...like a Flobberworm, or even worse like a flea. He had hyped them with his words and would then be the first to betray by leaving them. He felt sick and disgusted

with himself, but what else could he do? He had already done all that he could...if the movement was right then they would keep it up even without him, and if it wasn't then no harm would be done.

Yet he was now positively flushed at the present dilemma of just why the girl in question...Luna was her name? Had decided to snuggle against him on the sofa in the common room...she had said something about Nargles hadn't she? Maybe...Maybe the girl just felt lonely, right? He'd ask Ginny the next day if she wanted to be friends with a really strange Ravenclaw then. The Slytherin girl seemed always eager to prove herself, as if she had some sort of sin to wash out.

His thoughts darkened when he clasped on the invisibility cloak and left the common room, his nightly training in the chamber of secrets awaiting him. Neither of the ghosts he had come to value as family had been willing to tell him why Quirrell knew of the escape of the Basilisk. He didn't know thus whom he could trust, and left with little to no options, he had turned to Newton Scamander for training...and to Salazar Slytherin's books.

The chamber of secret's entrance near the Ravenclaw common room opened for him with ease, as he stepped through invisible only to be on the safe side. Soon the water drained as the door behind him clicked to a close, and with that he removed his cape and slowly descended down to the lower levels, where the fire of the chimney was already going strong. Sophie trilled in happiness, fluttering her wings that were now as big as those of a swan as she landed on his shoulder.

"How are you today, Sophie?" He asked as he carefully petted the bird's head, which thrilled back in happiness. "Did you stretch your wings enough?" The bird shook its head before starting to 'lick' Harry's hair, as if instead of a phoenix she was but a crow. Machiavelli hooted from the other nearby perch, having decided he too liked the privacy of the chamber. The hybrid owl was staring at him with narrowed eyes, before he puffed his chest out and 'majestically' began to fly with the grace of a turkey to land on his other shoulder.

"Of course I was going to ask you too Machiavelli." Harry said gently, "Can't have one of my friends feel left alone now, can I?"

The hoot in reply was more than enough to make Harry understand he had been saved by 'the grace of his majesty King Hybrid Poultry Machiavelli the first'...the boy chuckled as he shook his head in disbelief. It wasn't as if he was talking to him after all. It was just that he kind of sensed the various emotions a slightly bit better than normal. He just knew that Machiavelli wasn't actually jealous but just acting the part, just like he knew Sophie was merely eying the hybrid poultry with a look of mock distaste and snobbish attitude.

In the end, it was just like having two kids who fought one another for some time with their father. The fact they both began to weight quite a bit on his shoulders, however, was something he had tried in vain to make them understand. In the end, all he could do was bow to the strength of the majority that claimed that indeed his shoulders were more comfortable than a perch.

"Where's grandfather Newton?" He asked carefully, as the two birds took that moment to shrug with their wings. "Probably out in the forbidden forest..." Harry sighed. Newton Scamander had been first and foremost an explorer. Being copped inside a room, no matter how cozy it might look, didn't make him feel fine. No matter that he was already a ghost: he probably had chosen to become an undead just so he could scurry around the globe of his own. The only reason that kept him at Hogwarts was probably so that he could help him train...but for what reason?

Now that Harry thought hard about that, why did the man decide to follow him to Hogwarts? Because he had seen him being mistreated, right? But...hadn't he died before? How could he know that then? It...it didn't make sense. He felt a strange feeling of suffocation coming from his neck, as if someone was trying to choke the life out of him. It was just his nervousness and yet he couldn't help but feel as if someone was trying to murder him.

Newton Scamander had no reason to be helping him. Severus Snape had no reason to be helping him. Quirinus Quirrell apparently helped him because of a vow obtained by menacing him with the basilisk the year before, but...but was it all?

He knew now he should not trust anyone without a prior reason, but he still couldn't help but think that most of it was plain paranoia. It wasn't as if he had some sort of special power hidden within him that could help dark lords rule the world now, was it? He chuckled to

himself. If he really was all that powerful, he would have gone back to his real family, no matter what the law said about having been disowned or the likes.

And for real family, he meant the Dursley.

He flicked his wand out of his holster, and then silently tried to conjure the Trudo spell from the tip of his wand without speaking it. Nothing happened as his hand went fluidly through the motions with his wand. He knew he could do it without using words: that was how Bellatrix had tortured him and that was how Severus had fought. Yet the potions' master had told him in no small amount of terms that silent casting was something for fifth to sixth years onwards, and that it was preposterous for him to even think about making it work sooner.

Considering his luck in learning spells, he was keen to admit the professor was right. Sophie shripped sharply as she flapped her wings to fly back on the perch, while Machiavelli merely hooted a bit before settling on the armchair. Somehow, Harry felt the owl was trying to imitate a plushie. The boy clearly decided that being a Hybrid of multiple animals was probably taxing on the brain cells, and as such left Machiavelli alone to believe in his fantasies.

The wall of the chamber did look at him with little to no changes after all. Maybe he was kind of exaggerating, trying to learn new spells for battle when everything was going to be solved so soon, but he couldn't help but get the sick twisted feeling that things would eventually go terribly wrong, and because of that he had to prepare himself after all.

It was with these thoughts in mind that he kept on trying to get the Trudo spell to work without being pronounced.

It was with these thoughts in mind that he huffed before heading off to sleep on Salazar's bed. He'd wake up in time for breakfast and then head over to the lessons...and his routine, his normal absolutely easy to follow routine, would come for him as always.

James Potter

"Are you sure about that, Padfoot?" The man asked carefully, his eyes moving from the fire whiskey in his hand to the bottle on the

desk of his office, before heading over to where Sirius black was sitting with his own drink, and with a mortified expression.

"Sure as my nose, Prongs. I did a double take when I realized it: you know you asked me to look for the Invisibility cloak and the marauder's map no? Well, Ron had it for a while and he admitted that much, but he doesn't have it now."

"He could be lying...or have hidden it elsewhere."

"No Prongs, I'm sure he's not a liar like that. He didn't clearly remember where he had put the stuff." Sirius muttered back, "And his eyes were slightly glazed when he tried to remember you know? As if he had been Obliviated."

"Obliviated?" James eyes narrowed. "Someone would use such a prohibited spell on a child, at school no less? Nobody saw anything?"

"Nope." Sirius muttered back, shaking his head, "All I do know is that Ron Weasley has no recollection of when he lost the invisibility cloak, and Lillian's trunk didn't have the marauders' map, so..."

"Molly is going to have a fit when she's told...we have to warn the aurors Sirius." James pointed out, "It's a capital offense."

"We could, James...but if we do they might close the school. It would be better to find the culprit and deliver him in a hushed manner to the Ministry." A small sip from the dog animagus later, and he continued, "And...I don't want to see another kid die, Prongs."

"So you're also sure she's..."

"Yes. I'm sure." Sirius' smile turned awry. "I followed them. Couldn't enter the classroom they used and hear them, but she left two hours later and the kid was a mess on the floor. I'd warrant his spasms were Crucio-related, but without proof and without his testimony...I knew better than to move him, but when I came back with Pomfrey he was already gone...headstrong lad he is."

"He's not going to give it, is he?" James had already gulped down his glass, readying himself another, "He hates us, and...and I can even understand why."

"Bullshit!" Sirius' fist hit against the desk, "There was no way you could have known! No way I could have known or anyone else! You want to fault someone? Fault the guy who was the secret keeper of the Fidelius and didn't speak sooner! If I find out the bastard ...I'll wring his neck."

"Take a number." James chuckled grimly, "So do we have any suspects?"

"Gilderoy: the guy's a fraud. You remember how nervous he was after Harry spoke to the professors that morning? And did you see him at the dueling club? He got taken down by a third year...and what did he say at Hogsmeade a few weeks ago? 'My memory charm is second to none and yet you'll remember a night with good old Gilderoy!' made me sick to watch him flirt with Rosmerta."

James expression darkened, as he slowly drank another gulp of firewhiskey. "You reckon Hermione's innocent then and Gilderoy framed her?"

"I hope that's the case..." Sirius murmured. "I'm pretty sure Lillian's not going to like it when she receives the news that her friend's in Azkaban."

He smiled lightly, before saying with a voice filled with relief. "You know they got some Mandrakes ready? They're ahead of schedule but with the right incentives they managed to plant a few in a muggle greenhouse and..." He winked, "You'll see your favorite Goddaughter soon enough!"

"That's fantastic mate! Let's drink to it then!"

And with that bit of happy news, both men drank unaware that, unluckily for them, the next day was after all a school day.

Author's notes

And we have more to come of course. As some should have realized, Harry reawakens in an abandoned classroom at night, but

Sirius saw him in the afternoon and went to get help, yet he did not go near to Harry afterwards for fear he wouldn't talk with him or put him in danger with Bellatrix.

Bellatrix has apparently some sort of deep enmity with Sirius.

Lillian is apparently coming back in the end of the month of March...which leaves May and June.

The King's men are growing in number, and trust will become an issue eventually.

Newton's appearance in the castle is finally brought into questioning, Sophie makes an appearance with a bit of 'emotion' behind and so too does Machiavelli.

The question on why Luna seems to be prone to hug Harry is eventually going to be discovered and no, it is not pairing related. Gilderoy is apparently going to get framed and...

Who realized that I'm cursing the Muggle Studies position instead of the Dark Arts one!?

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 22

Harry was surprised to find that Gilderoy Lockhart wanted to speak with him. He was far more surprised to find out that it didn't matter where he went, strangely he would find himself tailed by one of the professors of the school. He decided it had to be a sort of strange coincidence, because he had learned that some secrets are better kept to oneself. He had no doubts people had tried entering the chamber before, but being the only parseltongue left at school there was no way they could open a door...even less get through the fake 'sewer-like' room and into the real chamber.

Truly, he was as air-tight as he could be...if he transferred at the end of the school term. In the end, he could avoid the man no longer, and so soon after lunch on Friday, he found himself sharing a brief word with the man by the hallway near the dueling lounge.

"Mr. Scamander! Finally a moment to catch you!" Gilderoy beamed a smile at him, which instantly made Harry shudder. "You just don't know how much I'm happy to finally speak with the Heir of Slytherin!" His right hand was still up in the air, probably waiting for him to shake it. Harry, of course, made his best shocked look. The man wasn't discouraged however, as he merely grabbed onto it to shake it by himself.

"I think that now would be the perfect moment to have a nice private chat in my office Mr. Scamander! We could discuss writing an autobiography and if you wish, I have just the perfect publisher and editor if you desire to have a book on your life writ..."

"Professor Lockhart!" Minerva McGonagall's voice echoed through the corridor, "Would you mind coming with me for a moment?" As the stern head of the Gryffindor house practically ordered that, Lockhart cringed. "I remember her at my times..." He muttered, "Is she still able to do the Death Glare of Doom?"

Harry's eyebrows rose in shock, as he saw the elderly witch literally grab Gilderoy by the ear and pull him away. "Come Gilderoy! We have to talk about your choice of books for the next year!"

"But professor..."

"No buts Gilderoy!"

Harry's head slightly moved to the side in puzzlement, as he scratched the back of his head slowly. Were the professors rounding up on him? Or were they keeping an eye out on Lockhart? He was quite puzzled by it, but decided to say nothing. As his steps brought him awkwardly away and towards his usual Friday afternoon lesson with Severus, he kept glancing back and in front with a slightly paranoid intention; better safe than sorry after all.

He knocked carefully at the door of the potions' master office, which swung open to admit him inside. It took him a few seconds to realize that his professor wasn't alone, but in the company of his...biological mother? Lily Potter was absentmindedly tracing some sort of complex chemical procedure on the chalkboard, while Severus was with his arms crossed slightly behind her to her left, watching her write and with his face lost in thoughts. They both turned around as he entered however, one with surprise and the other with a knowing look.

"Harry?" Lily asked perplexed, as she slightly frowned. "Are you in detention with Severus again?"

"Miss Potter," Harry replied formally and as politely as he could, "I'm training in dueling with professor Snape as per my mother's orders."

"Aren't you a bit too young for that?" She replied slightly put off, but nevertheless concerned. "Dueling should be for later years...even Lockhart understood that and stopped his club's reunions."

"Because he's a babbling fool who lost to a third year," Severus retorted, "Mr. Scamander, you may begin to prepare the room." Harry merely nodded, and with his wand out he began to slowly make the various desks float further away, before biting his lips when it came to the wards to launch near the fragile glass objects. He turned around to look at his professor for instruction, and saw that Lily Potter was observing him quietly, while Severus instead nodded briefly and moved forward to cast the wards.

"Lily." Severus said after a few moments, startling her out of her daydreaming, "We can continue our discussion another day, all right?"

"All right Sev." The red haired woman replied, before slowly walking outside. "Don't go easy with Sev, Harry: he's mean when he starts casting hexes." Lily added with a wink to him, before leaving the room and closing the door behind her.

As soon as she was out, Severus casted the remaining charms, comprising also of a few privacy ones, before finally settling on his stance. Harry got in his quietly, his entire body as much as possible on a single axis to minimize the area the opponent could target, and then after the bowing motion the spells began.

"Flipendo!" Harry exclaimed, only for Severus to look at him with mild annoyance.

"Protego." The potions' master retorted, sending the spell to redirect itself against the floor, "Really Harry? Must we always start with this?"

"Just to make sure you're awake, Severus." Harry winked, before starting to move as his next spell came through, "Trudo!"

"Expelliarmus!" The jet of red energy hit mere steps from where Harry would have been had he kept up his moving, while the ethereal lances of the Trudo spell fell short of a few centimeters from the man's legs. "Better." Severus admitted, "I am going easy on you."

"Serpensortia!" Harry bellowed as a snake of black color and as big as one of his legs sprouted from the tip of his wand, slithering towards Severus who merely pointed his wand in silence at the beast. The snake disappeared in smoke, yet Harry wasn't done.

"Confringo!"

"Protego." Severus rolled his eyes again, "Come on. You're moving for a reason are you not?"

"Locomotor..."

"Depulso!" Severus' own spell banished Harry to the other side of the classroom, where his back hit against the softened by the wards wall of stone. "Really Harry, I am not made of glass and if you

believe a second year able to wound me, then you are sorely mistaken."

"It's not that easy!" Harry exclaimed back, standing on his feet, "I mean...I know you're good and all Professor, but...what if I get lucky?" At his question, Severus raised an eyebrow.

"Mr. Scamander. I assure you that unless you suddenly develop the dueling style of a master in the dark arts, there is little you could do to harm me. I am more than able to cast a silent Protego, as I keep on reiterating since the beginning of our dueling lessons."

"I don't want to learn the intent to kill, professor." Harry muttered back.

Severus' lips twitched in a slight nervousness, "Mr. Scamander, what if your adoring mother was to find you one day? Would you lay down your wand and accept your punishment?"

"She is she and you are you." Harry replied quietly, "No-one should be judged with the measure of another."

"One day, Mr. Scamander, you will have to tell me where you find these...words of wisdom." Severus muttered.

"Wikipedia." Harry deadpanned. "Ask for a 'computer' the next time you go through the room of requirements. Look for it on the web."

"Web? There are spiders in there?" Severus' head inclined to the side, "And what would a...computer be?"

"Ask for a computer and a guide to it." Harry relented, "It is kind of complicated to explain..."

"I think I will do just that." Then Severus flicked his wand and releasing a single red orb to which Harry barely managed the counter by accio'ing a chair to intercept it.

"At least you do have situational awareness." Severus muttered. Then, once more, they began dueling. Indeed Harry's own thoughts on the matter had been right: while the spells were clearly non-lethal...they were kid's spells. The potions' masters own were eerily reminiscent of the war spells, in that they were short, quick and the

few times the man had to cast anything longer he did so non-verbally by reflex.

Nobody would launch a 'Verdimillious Duo' verbally. With the confirmation earned more and more with the passing of days, Harry knew why people sort-of insisted he should teach dueling at the club: he hadn't followed the Hogwarts curriculum at all, or if he had it had been that of hundreds of years before, and by doing so he had indeed grown powerful. Was the reason Hogwarts had many empty classrooms due to this too?

Or maybe was it that in time of peace certain spells were simply meaningless? In truth a lot of spells apparently held the same effect but with different intonations and names. The intent behind them however was always identical. Was it thus only intent that mattered, and not even wand movement?

Few hours later, he was exhausted and Severus finished the lesson.

"Next time, Mr. Scamander, do start from the beginning with the intention to harm. It would make things easier." Harry nodded back awkwardly, before helping in settling the class back and then saying goodbye to the professor. As soon as he walked out, his steps began to bring him towards the old Slytherin common rooms, that were now largely uninhabited. Only a few of the seventh years remained behind, mostly for the lack of will to pack and move when they'd grown up practically all their school life in the dungeons.

He should have to write back 'home' soon, but till then he was currently busy actually testing the new spells and curses of Salazar himself...a few of which were in parseltongue, and decisively difficult to pronounce. They were mostly to be spoken by mind, but...it was difficult. Far more than merely attempting non-verbal casting, and as he kept on musing over how to do it, he absentmindedly walked past the Bloody Baron who did not even speak to him.

Harry stilled and turned around, staring at the silent form of the bloody baron just hovering aimlessly through the corridor. He hesitated before deciding to follow the ghost. He was about to leave the school after all, at the very least he'd get his answers. The ghost seemed to hover peculiarly towards an unused room deep within the dungeon's own bowels, one that apparently held a wooden door. Opening it, Harry found himself looking at a spiraling staircase dug

in the stone itself, that slowly but surely began to lead him downwards.

At a certain point during the descent, torches flickered to light in an eerie blue color along the walls, and as Harry kept on descending, the air became noticeably colder. At the end of the flight of stairs stood a closed door, runes etched upon its surface which glittered like pale silver, as a small rock basin stood in the middle of it. Upon the archway of the doorway, the words "Mors in magicae et magia in morte" stood etched clearly, while at the center of the door another set of words read.

"Sanguis est via magicae et magica est via magiis."

"Blood is the way of magic, and magic is the way of blood." The boy whispered slowly, as his hands touched upon the basin trying to understand what its use was...and yet he came up pretty short. The ring held no knowledge of what it was and the locket either; whatever it was...it was something he should know, and yet he did not. It had to be important however, so much that even the ghosts had left him alone for the remainder of the year.

He turned around, coming face to face with someone that shouldn't have been there to begin with. Peeves stood, ethereally floating, on the stairs that should have led him upwards. His face was serious and not even an ounce of a joke was visible on his face. It looked...far less like Peeves, and far more sinister.

"So you have found this place." Peeves muttered, rolling his ghostly eyes. "I suppose the two idiots thought it would be funny I bet." The ghost added. "Let's have fun at Peeves' expenses of course, stupid idiots."

"What...what's behind the door?" Harry asked carefully.

"A rock." Peeves replied with a tight grin. "A wonderful, sublime rock: it isn't squared and it isn't spherical. It's just a piece of compressed dirt someone thought would be funny to place behind a door that only the blood of the four founders could open...what do you think it is you idiot!? Of course it's something powerful and mind boggling!" The poltergeist hissed, "I gave them orders to keep you away of course, but did they listen? No they did not!"

"You...giving orders?"

"I can touch you, Harry." The poltergeist snarled as his right hand shot forward, gripping the boy by the scruff of the neck, "You will find that the ability to touch and act is not something all poltergeists can do. To keep my presence, my appearance...it requires a great power. I am the top of the food chain around Hogwarts, and you'd better remember it." The ghost whispered to his ears, "I know of your Basilisk and her daring escape...I know of your plans and of all you have to lose should I tattle...but you know what makes a poltergeist different from a ghost Harry, huh? Do you know?"

"We..." Harry's eyes bulged in shock as the ghostly figure lifted him with ease. "We are the soul of the castle, Harry. We are the magic that makes the armors tick and the portrait move. We are that which makes the door open and the stairways move. We are the product of the magic and all...all of this is because there is a stone behind that door."

Harry felt himself being moved away from the door, and back upstairs slowly. The eyes of the poltergeist kept drilling holes with his as it suavely spoke.

"I have seen many things and I always remember. I never forget and I never surrender. Mark my words and mark them well, for your death I would feel swell. The clock ticks and cannot stop. The hands are moving for the pot. There is truth and there is power, but all you seek...is the clock tower." And then Harry was cast out of the room and onto the floor.

"Remember, remember the fifth of November Harry. And whatever you do know this..." The poltergeist finished, "That rock is mine. Burn the school, rape the women, pillage all and kill everyone and I will laugh with you and pat your back...but that Rock. Is. Mine. Touch that door, open that door, take that rock...and I will find you and I will kill you." Peeves turned: his appearance was now by far scarier than normal, and the poltergeist disappeared within the walls while closing with a strong thud the door behind him without saying another word. Harry gulped...and then began to run away from there.

He had no idea what Peeves was or wanted...but he knew he wouldn't stick around ever again to find out.

James Potter

To find a single student in school, one would think it an easy task. Once, it was like that. All that was needed was to ask a portrait, or a ghost, and the answer would immediately be made available. Instead since nearly the beginning of the year both had disappeared. The portraits stood eerily empty and the ghosts were nowhere to be seen. It was like walking into an empty school: nobody really knew what it meant to be without the chatter of the portraits until they were gone.

The school was cast in a strange silence, as the door merely opened and closed without having to coo some of them into submission or tickle others. Hogwarts was looking more and more like a normal castle, rather than a magical one. Furthermore...it looked more like a haunted castle than a happy one. Even the Weasley twins had all but stopped their pranking, claiming they had been 'dissuaded' by the rest of their house. Gryffindor was in tight spot already, and with the revelation of the Granger girl as the unlucky sacrificial lamb, the prestige had been completely lost and fed to the wolf.

It was the era of Slytherin now, as some had started calling the 'reign' of the King of Hogwarts over a good portion of the Slytherins, Ravenclaw and Hufflepuffs. If someone had told James Potter that Hogwarts would be united under a single house in less than a year, he would have called them mad. Yet differences were cast aside surprisingly easily, just as if something guided the entire process in order for it to be smooth. It was clearly impossible of course, but James remembered pretty well the underlying currents of hate that circled through the houses.

It was merely impossible to destroy the flames of ignorance and hatred with merely a year. Sure, maybe it was still the novelty of the 'movement' in question, but eventually discrepancies would show and nothing would come from it anymore. Hell, he too had seen at his time a few students promoting 'between house-unity' and generally those groups did not last more than a few days...weeks at most.

He was glad however. Today his daughter would receive the Mandrake restorative draught, and he was going to be there in the afternoon. He had actually wanted to tell Harry beforehand, since he

recalled seeing him a bit worried over the fate of his sister. If he didn't like to talk to his mother and his father, at the very least he'd be grateful to have his sister back to talk with.

It was kind of bizarre entering the dining hall for lunch and seeing the tables split differently from the norm. Somehow one day a fifth table had been added to the mix, and to that table converged the 'Hogwarts' students. Probably that was the reason this movement was still going strong: magic was helping it along. Still James had to wonder if all of this was but a carefully staged prop or not.

If it was, then why didn't Dumbledore disband it? It was just as if...if the man didn't care. Sure, on one hand he was grateful that the old wizard was helping out him and Lily to get their son back, but on the other hand...on the other hand he had to ask himself why nothing was being done with the 'Union' group.

The King's men club was starting to hover closely to sedition actually. He still recalled when he had tried to give to a Gryffindor, Seamus Finnigan, twenty points for answering correctly a question. Sure, maybe he was just trying to one-up Severus and his Slytherin...but the fact that the boy in question had refused the points...it had never happened before that he had mention of. After him, every now and then a member of the group refused the points he'd dish out for answering questions, and so too was happening in the other classes.

He was just glad he wasn't the head of the Hufflepuffs. Pomona was on the verge of a nervous breakdown last he checked. The 'Hogwarts' followers had moved into their 'official' dormitories in the remaining tower, those who did not had instead remained in the cellars. To his surprise, Neville was actually 'leading' this sort of rebellion among the Hufflepuffs, claiming that Harry was no better than the Dark Lord in the making. While that was a bit excessive as a statement, since after all it was just a club, the fact that Neville of all people was actually the one making the fuss was...bizarre.

He had thought the two of them friends actually. James sighed as he began to trek all the way upstairs to the Ravenclaw tower. Since the last bout of 'anger' the boy had apparently calmed down. He did look meeker too...maybe the possession had stopped with the departure of the murderer...Voldemort himself. If only the ministry hadn't wanted to drop their heads beneath the sand and avoid the thought

of the Dark Lord being still a danger. There was a reason why Lillian was the Girl-Who-Lived! There had been a prophecy...

Yet he couldn't help but feel he was missing something very important out of the entire thing. It was just a slight feeling that something was wrong, but he couldn't put his finger on it at all. He resumed thinking about it later, and with a shrug opened up the door of the Ravenclaw common room. It was then that his sight brought to his attention the fact that the room was deserted. He blinked owlishly, trying to come up with a reason, any reason actually, for the room to be devoid of all of its participants.

"Blippy!" He exclaimed, catching the attention of a house elf that materialized with a soft pop next to him.

"Yes Master James sir?"

"Where is everyone!?"

Blippy, a scrawny elf, could but look around in surprise too before shaking its giant head strongly.

"Blippy doesn't know sir! Blippy doesn't clean the room after students say they need chaos with the notes sir!" The elf squeaked, and James frowned more. Every common room had a house elf that usually went around cleaning and tidying the room. Furthermore they always kept an eye and an ear to make sure the students weren't doing something bad. The fact that Blippy had been convinced to turn a blind eye...He mused it over...someone had to have confounded the Elf in question.

If someone had confounded the elf, then the question was why. The murderer maybe? The real plotter of the scam with the diary? If so...

"Blippy, you know the students can't order you around, right?"

"Blippy didn't know that Master James sir!" The house elf's eyes widened, "Did Blippy do something wrong? Does she have to punish herself Master James sir?"

"No...No." James had replied, "It's all right Blippy. You can go."

James had much to think, as the house elf plopped herself out of the room. If the elf had been confounded and obliviated...then the common room had been breached already...He needed some paper and a diagram, because he was starting to lose the points.

James Potter turned and quickly left in a hurry, this time to go and outright warn Minerva, since Albus was out of the castle and busy at the Wizengamot. His thoughts brought him on all that he knew of: Harry had started something at the beginning of the year, the Basilisk had been called into being the culprit, but the boy had defended it and it had turned out he was right. The chamber of secrets was nothing more than a sewer with a sleeping Basilisk somewhere in it, and...and Harry was possessed by Voldemort.

Yet no matter how much the professor kept an eye on him, he did nothing of the sorts. He went to the club's meetings and spoke when his turn was, but for the rest didn't apparently seem to be the same as when he had made his speech in front of the architect's statue. Basically, Harry felt different...because maybe he was different? He had spent the last of summer with Bellatrix, and...and if Sirius' words were true, then the woman had used a set of Crucio spells on him.

Long lasting effects of Crucio were various. They could go from spasms to nervous tics and all the way to insanity like poor Frank and Alice Longbottom. Yet...yet Harry didn't seem to be suffering from any of them. What if he was, instead? James was mentally cursing himself for not having thought about it sooner. Sure, he had said it could have been a possession, but what if it had merely been Harry's magic that had lashed out in fright? The boy was afraid of adults, he didn't believe in them and that much was as clear as the day.

Maybe...maybe they were trying to see the thing on the wrong side of the coin. Sure, it would be easy to blame Voldemort and be done with it, but what if Harry had merely been himself from the beginning? What if someone had taken care to brainwash him...and then someone else had Obliviated him and brought back his 'normal' personality at the end of the murders?

It seemed so much like one of those muggle stories that Lily liked to read, those concerning mysteries and strange events. Maybe...maybe this was the breakthrough they needed!

Gilderoy Lockhart was starting to look far less like a saint and far more like a diabolical evil man. He was a fraud, a master Obliviator, and last they had checked he had still been trying to get near Harry again...and wasn't he also an ex-Ravenclaw? Of course it sounded stupid, for Albus to willingly hire a potential menace, but Snivellus was after all a Death Eater to begin with: there was no doubt the headmaster had a great heart, always ready to forgive and give a second chance.

Everything went back to Gilderoy Lockhart. His arrival this year, his frauds, his Oblivate ability, his seeking out Harry, his reactions when Harry called on him during that day at breakfast, the Chamber of Secrets had been a distraction as well as the boy's actions. Gilderoy Lockhart was the murderer, and the horrendous bastard had dared accuse a student of the school of this and even place stuff belonging to the murdered students in the girl's trunk...

He'd get the truth out the man, even if he had to strangle him and force-feed him Veritaserum.

Still, by the time he fumingly reached the teacher's lounge, he was surprised to find it empty. Blinking perplexedly, he turned around and started walking towards the Headmaster's office. Maybe Dumbledore had come back and called for an urgent meeting?

Startled, James finally found someone across the hallway, a group of excited third years Hufflepuffs who were apparently running towards the dining hall, their wands drawn.

The sick feeling in his guts just intensified as he decided to follow in silence behind them, trying to come to terms with the fact that something was happening, and that whatever it was, it was going on in that specific moment in the dining hall.

When he finally entered the room, he realized that there stood only three tables for lunch, the third one being far grander and bigger than the other two. It was with a sick understanding that he realized what had happened.

Ravenclaw and Slytherin had apparently united under a common banner completely, and sitting at the head of the table were both Harry Scamander and Draco Malfoy, while many of the Hufflepuffs

and Gryffindors were now currently eying the situation carefully...peer pressure was starting to play an effect.

If only Albus was there to solve the problem...already he saw that the reason the professors were absent was made manifest: some light scuffle was going on between a few Hufflepuffs, who were fighting one another. Some wanted to leave and join the bigger table while others fought them to prevent it. Many of the Gryffindors held sick faces at the sight, and the once proud and boasting house of the lion was now nothing more than the smallest of the voices, as if anything they did would prove them wrong again.

It was impossible for this to have happened in such a short time. It was impossible for Slytherins that held family that fought against muggleborns for decades to merely accept having a half-blood or a 'mud' blood next to them at lunch and act kindly to him. Yet they were and nothing seemed to be stopping them from helping out. The golden H of Hogwarts was embroiled on their chests in place of the usual crest of the house, and as James eyes went to Minerva's, he realized the elderly woman was torn.

The old witch was probably fighting between her desire to have order and the fact that, strange as it seemed, this sort of 'club' was working well. Yet as her wand cast an Incarcerous spell to separate two fifth year Hufflepuffs, with Pomona screaming to the heavens that Hufflepuffs looked out for one another and did not commit fratricide, James saw Harry stand up.

"The professor's right you know?" He said, moving closer to Pomona who was still shaking and sobbing. "It's a sad thing when brother fights brother." The boy added quietly, "And it's even sadder when it's done for something as sickening as 'house points'...what do you do with them? Earn a shiny cup? Is that all the extent you need to go to sell your own brothers and sisters? For points? For a cup you won't even bring home? You're not worthy of Helga's dream or house to begin with." Harry shook his head at the rowdy cries that came from the table.

"You do not look out for your own! You never did!" He yelled back, "Because look around! We are all students, we all belong here, and yet you would claim that some have more rights than others!? Yet you claim that you should decide for what others wish and want? I do not force people to follow me! If they do it's their free will that

binds them to my cause! I am not the Dark Lord and I will never become one. Change is inevitable! Those who accept it will rise with me, and those who don't will be swept aside!"

And then the doors of the great hall opened, and Albus Dumbledore strolled in with a twinkle in his eyes and a smile. Behind him, the figures of an ashen faced Lily Potter came into view with those of a pale Lillian, who had apparently been given the potion sooner than expected. Harry's own words died in his mouth and James noticed that the boy had begun to tremble and pale slightly.

"Now Miss Potter...why don't you tell this happily reunited hall how you were petrified?"

And with the silence that entombed the room, the sick feeling in James gut reached a new peak.

Author's notes

Cliff-hanger.

Now, I warranted some might have been confused from the chapter before, especially the reasons on why Draco did not actually invite Harry to the New Year Eve or why I did not write about it. The reason is plot-related. It is not hazarded and it is not a loose point, but that will come into the events far, far down the road.

One thing I am usually prone to do, and that leads to many problems with reviewers, is that I tend to foreshadow and leave 'blanks' that are filled on later on during the story where they can 'hit' the hardest. I also tend to be of the belief that a strong character for a story is one who becomes strong as the story progresses, not one who is strong from the beginning. To defeat one's own weaknesses and rise above the others, one needs to climb walls of skulls and blood. Harry will stop being a coward, but you must understand that I doubt any twelve year old grown normally would outright say "Aw yeah, Dark Lord pownage coming right up!" The Harry from canon fought a troll at eleven because he was 1)incredibly stupid, 2)not understanding of the concepts 'You could have died you silly idiot' because nobody explained it to him. This Harry knows death exists, and he knows there are people who care for him (still doesn't know the Dursley's are dead after all) so...'tactical retreat' is different from 'running away'.

The reason I went from December to March without batting an eyelid is seemingly the same as 'leaving a blank' that is to be filled later on. (Next chapter and going onwards)

That said, the third Year will most clearly not be at Hogwarts. So I have to ask the readers if they still would read about it happening at Durmstrang, around the globe, at Nurmengard, Azkaban and on the island of Montecristo (Tuscany). Yes. The third year is ripe of events world-wide, however since it will display some 'non-canon' characters, I know many do not like to read about that and I know the outright fright/fear of OCs overshadowing protagonists...worry not, I'm sticking to those characters that the wiki can spurn out as much as possible.

Furthermore, I'm also writing here the 'alliance-lines' so that you can have an easier time understanding 'what sides there are around'.

Voldemort (Ring of Gaunt) - Lucius Malfoy-Narcissa Malfoy

Voldemort (Cup of Hufflepuff) - Bellatrix Scamander-Severus Snape

Voldemort (Diary) - Hermione Granger, Hopefully dead.

Voldemort (Locket of Slytherin) - Quirinus Quirrell, Hopefully dead.

Voldemort (Lillian Potter) - Hopefully inactive.

Voldemort (Diadem of Ravenclaw) - Let us hope he doesn't show up!

Voldemort (Real one) - He's dead we all pray.

The Voice - Severus Snape, Madame Maxime, Isabella Rossi

Grindelwald - ?Tom Riddle?, Igor Karkaroff.

Dumbledore - Severus Snape, Order of the Phoenix, Potters.

Harry Scamander - King's men club inner circle, Severus Snape, 'The Voice'.

These are the most important ones.

I also, furthermore, left a hint in this particular chapter showcasing how 'not normal' it is at all for a political movement that wishes to eradicate traditions to 'attach' itself so fast. Still, I suggest people to have a look around the net for 'The Wave' film, and read the plot of it. The idea of the 'movement' came from that film actually.

Of course Gilderoy Lockhart did not Obliviate the House Elf...right?

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 23

"Now Miss Potter...why don't you tell this happily reunited hall how you were petrified?" The question buzzed through Harry's ears, as his eyes stared into the shaking form of Lillian who was apparently trembling and fighting against herself to speak. Harry gulped nervously as his sister finally gathered enough courage to speak.

"The...The basilisk! Harry's using a basilisk and has the ghosts on his side, and he's under the Imperius curse!" Harry's first thought went to get his wand, but he stilled himself as a set of wands had already been pointed at him by the professors, except Flitwick who was aghast and shocked, and Pomona who was still crying. Even his so called father had a wand at him, while his 'mother' was crying as the students looked at him in shock.

"Please surrender Harry," Lily Potter said with her voice cracking from the strain, "Please, don't make it worse."

"She's right son," James exclaimed from the doorway, his wand out. "I know it's hard to fight off the Imperius, but you've got to understand you're going to lose anyway!"

Harry's face morphed in shock, as he looked around. The twinkle in Albus' eyes was pretty clear: he wanted him captured and then spared under the Imperius defense. He wanted the Potters indebted with him upon his safety, and he wanted him with the Potters. Harry knew Severus was merely acting his part. His sister still believed him under the Imperius, and that could be used.

"I suppose he suspected as much then," Harry chuckled, shaking his head. "Well...Show's over. I'm the big bad guy, right? The Heir of Slytherin is evil by default, let us all remember that the Girl-Who-Lived cannot lie." He spat out with a visible frown. "Yet look: everyone's hands on their wands already. What is it I wonder that makes you believe in someone like Dumbledore? Is it the beard? The eye twinkling? The fact he dresses like an elderly with Alzheimer would?" There were coughs from the tables, especially the muggleborns and half-bloods who knew what he was talking about.

"Mr. Scamander. Please deliver your wand." Albus spoke evenly, "I assure you, no harm will happen to you. Removing the Imperius curse is not difficult, and I can guarantee..."

Harry grinned, before bringing theatrically his right hand to his chin, "I wonder what you can guarantee headmaster. The number of Obliviates used on me? The number of Legilimency attacks you tried to do on me? The fact that your duel with Grindelwald was a scam? Tell me Headmaster, I'm curious."

In the silence of the hall, not a breath was drawn as Albus merely looked at Harry with a slight frown marring his features. It was but a second, and then he felt the tell-tale sign of the Incarcerous rope when it appeared from the tip of a wand. He did not oppose the spell cast by one of the professors. He merely had to turn his head to realize it had been his father, of all people, to launch it on him.

"Typical." Harry snorted. "I suppose you have proofs of your statements, Lillian? Because unless I'm mistaken...you cannot mount a case only on hearsay...or is this society, these 'wizards', so much further down the line of evolution than I thought them able of?"

"Mr. Scamander. Your attitude is forgiven only because they are, hopefully, not your words." Albus stated, "And I have seen through the mind of young Miss Potter the Chamber of Secrets as it should be. Not the one that you displayed to Alastor Moody, Nymphadora Tonks and James Potter. That is enough to mount a case: hiding dark artifacts within a school is passable with an Azkaban stay."

"Oh joy." Harry ironically replied. "You are stupidly expecting me to not have a bargaining chip with the Wizengamot."

"I expect nothing from you, Mr. Scamander." Albus said calmly, "I would like however for you to remove your Occlumency shields. Do not force me to access by force, for I will if pressed: we need to remove the Imperius from you as fast as possible."

"Ha. Good luck old buffoon!" He snarled back, lashing out against the ropes, "Keep on believing I am the evil guy only because I'm the heir of Slytherin! I wonder: are you going to give out points to Miss Potter for having remembered something? You disgust me, Albus Dumbledore. Do you hear me!? You disg..."

"Silencio Mr. Scamander, silence." Albus muttered, flicking his own wand with blinding speed. "James, please put Mr. Scamander in the dungeons: after his job on restoring the Slytherin dormitories, they are now returned to their function: a prison." With those commanding words, Harry found himself being levitated by his father and carried like a bag out of the dining hall. In silence, complete and utter, he left the dining hall.

The last words he heard however were from Albus himself.

"Now Mr. Lockhart...I have to speak with you concerning some of your fantastic voyages...and a few people I interviewed during my absence..."

Harry did not try to fight the Incarcerous, merely letting his father bring him into the 'prison'. He knew the way out after all. There was little they could do to hold him trapped within Hogwarts itself, and with the Invisibility cloak beneath the Invisible one, he was pretty much sure he could escape unscathed. He'd just have to contact Severus, or worst situation possible, just wait in the Chamber of Secrets until the end of the year.

The thought that he shouldn't run crossed his mind briefly, but just as briefly it left. Dumbledore wouldn't give him a fair trial, nor would the Wizengamot if it believed in Albus to begin with. His only chance was leaving. The Room of Requirement could also be a safe haven, as long as he made sure it could only open for him and him alone.

So no, Harry wasn't the least frightened or worried about the situation. He was fuming in anger however, and that was for a completely different reason. Albus had just wanted to drive home the point once more. He had left him stew his idea, his union, for the sole purpose to then cast an extremely negative light on him. The reason he had done so was clear...if anyone else were to try again, then of course the result would be the same as before, and thus nobody would participate in a second attempt.

The only thing that had prevented him from screaming was that he had expected a result like this one. He had expected Dumbledore to win. He had counted on it actually. He had counted on the fact that he would leave to save himself from the consequences of his actions. He had played like an adult and had lost like one. Maybe he should have raised his wand and challenged Dumbledore to a duel?

Of course he knew how 'far' he would have gone before dying...maybe to the bowing gesture.

The cell he was gently lowered into had once been nothing more than a place to hold spare chairs for the common room. Now devoid of door but plastered with runes to prevent magic and keep the metallic bars safely melded with the floor. They did lift only to let him in, before lowering themselves again effectively trapping him inside.

"I...I don't know if I actually ever spoke to the real Harry this year." James said, "But if you're somewhere inside, son...Know that your dad loves you, all right? We'll get you out of this mess in no time: you can trust me." The man then awkwardly smiled. "Now...Accio Harry's Wand!"

In silence, nothing happened. The wand tugged within Harry's sleeve, but the holder held it chained to its place within his forearm. Safely tucked away in the Invisible cloak, the wand was nowhere to be seen on his person.

"Uhm...You don't have your wand on you then? I see." James muttered, "Well...I'll get you something to eat for dinner. Don't worry: Albus will take care to get you back on the right track." And then, just as James left the dungeons closing the door behind him, Harry stood up on his own two feet. His back leaned against the wall to give him the space to maneuver himself to a standing position, and then with the most ease and tranquility, he chuckled.

His chuckle turned into a full-fledged laughter, because this...this was easier than what he had thought.

Had he been closed into the Gryffindor tower, the Ravenclaw Tower, a tower whatever or the Headmaster's office...then it would have been far more difficult. Like this, however...he stilled. He could leave the cell by merely speaking in parseltongue. Yet this was easy, too easy nearly. It was as if...

He sat back down without hesitation, gritting his teeth as he felt his bum hit the stone floor. Carefully he began to move and exert his muscles against the rope of the spell. With the passing of time, it would deteriorate to the point of breaking down. There was no need to use parseltongue immediately, and if he was really being watched,

then better to try and free oneself without giving away the inner workings of the dungeons.

Ten minutes later, the ropes had disappeared in smoke, and as he stood up while stretching his arms, he began to ponder.

"Dobby!" He yelled in the dungeon.

A soft pop later, and beyond the prison's bars stood Draco's house elf.

"Harry Scamander sir has called Dobby, sir?" The elf squeaked.

"Dobby!" Another elf appeared few seconds later, "You no can stay here! Master Dumbledore says no one..."

"Cuspis Terrae." Harry muttered in parseltongue, as his wand touched briefly the right wall of his cell. The runes flickered and let the magic pass by, knowledgeable only that in the dungeons, Parseltongue was to be left free to flow. The second house elf was soon pushed by a protruding mass of rock within the confines of the cell as Harry left them, closing the bars behind him with a small smile.

The elf's feet and arms found themselves tightly held by the rocks within the prison, and as the elf magic did not work in getting him out of there, Harry smiled. The ring was useful...Hogwarts was not merely a castle after all. It was a fortress too.

"Dobby." Harry began carefully. "Move upstairs, get my stuff and bring it back here. Be quick."

"Harry Scamander sir?" Dobby squeaked perplexed. "Does Master Draco know?"

"Course he does." Harry rolled his eyes, the lie escaping his lips easily. "Move it Dobby."

"Yes sir!" And then Dobby was gone. As the house elf left, Harry's wand shot forward towards the door, metal bars plastering themselves against it to prevent entry. A dungeon and a prison could keep prisoners in after all, but also problems out. He just had

to wait for his trunk to come around, and then...and then what if some elf had been placed to keep an eye on his stuff also?

He narrowed his eyes, placing his wand back in his sleeve as he walked towards the deeper levels of the Slytherin common room. Soft plops echoed behind him, and he knew he had been right. So paranoia was his new second name apparently. Dumbledore wasn't joking: he was really doing his best to keep him trapped.

"Mipsy captured! Warn Master Dumbledore!" A tiny squeaky voice said to another from behind Harry's back, but he did not stop moving. The ring pulsed, showing him the way out...he groaned mentally. Really, Salazar? Did you really have to put a way out in that way?

He was starting to hate the man. What was it with him and bathrooms? Harry ran to the third door on the left, knocked on it twice and then opened it. As soon as he did that, the normal looking bathroom with tiles and toilets gave way to the old way people went to the bathroom: the roman ones of 'communal' toilets. The bathroom's tiles were a mosaic, depicting the golden H of Hogwarts as the bathroom's seats were in a sort of upside down U from the door's opening. On the walls frescos of forest nature stood, maybe to 'help' in relieving one's own bowels...

There was no stench luckily, as nobody had been using them for centuries. With his wand out once more, he hissed the closure of the door behind him and then headed off towards the sixth toilet seat of the row, where the fresco of the wall depicted in that precise spot a snake dozing off on a tree branch.

"Salazar asks your service: deliver me to safety snake of the forest!" He hissed. The snake opened its eyes by magic, and slithered down from his painted branch, disappearing seamlessly within the toilet seat itself. There was a clack, a sound of wheels turning, and then the toilet seat gave way to a metallic pole that apparently lowered itself deep beneath the castle's dungeon floor.

Harry would have laughed his heart out: this seemed more and more like a film...something like 'The Great Escape' or 'Escape from Alcatraz'. Only the guards were made of house elves, and he was escaping thanks to plans prepared by Salazar Slytherin centuries before in the event of 'ending up imprisoned in his own cells'...The

man was either a complete genius or bonkers, and Harry was still making difficulty in deciding between the two.

His feet touched the ground, and he took a deep breath as the light from above disappeared. The trapdoor had probably reset itself after all. Small lights flickered above his head, displaying the safe route towards the exit. He was escaping from Hogwarts by running through a tunnel, beneath the lake, that strangely brought to his mind yet one more film: the one where at the end the protagonist has to jump from the dam to save himself.

Harry shivered at the thought. He just hoped he didn't have to actually do that. Absentmindedly he began to list what he had on his person: his wand was there and that was the most important thing, soon followed by the Invisible Cloak, the three items of Salazar Slytherin, the very same Bezoar in his pocket since first year, the Invisibility Cloak and...well, his robes. The dark tunnel, barely lit by the flickering lights that seemed to have no sources suddenly shone a bit more, as from within a shower of sparks and flames Sophie appeared with a sharp shrill...bringing his trunk together with her.

"Show-off!" He hissed to the phoenix who happily trilled back. "Keep quiet for Merlin's sakes: we're escaping, not going to the circus!" The mocking tone was understood by the phoenix, which flapped her wings long enough to land on the boy's shoulders. "You're having fun I suppose." Harry chuckled. "You just hold tight and let's get out of here then." He shrunk his trunk carefully, before pocketing it and heading towards the exit.

"Thankfully Heather's already out of here." He muttered, "You know you could help me by bringing me outside with your flash-teleport or whatever it is, right?" As an answer, the phoenix cooed softly. "Did you get Machiavelli out by the way?"

"Chirp."

"Is that a yes or a: 'I forgot, ops'?"

"Chirp."

"You got him out of the owl tower, right?"

"Chirp."

"Don't make the pout face."

"Chirp!"

"Stop chirping at me phoenix! Go and get him out: think about his feelings!" Harry exclaimed exasperated, as the phoenix rolled her eyes and gave him a light peck on the head. "So you got him out. Was it that hard to say?"

"Chirp." She fluttered her wings while puffing her chest out as she chirruped that last part.

"You enjoy having fun at my expenses. I'm writing this down for the day you plead me for a cracker." Harry muttered, only to receive a distinctive flap of the wing to the back of his head. "Yes, you're as hybridized with a parrot as Machiavelli is!" Another flap, "Stop it! You're supposed to be a normal magical familiar!" Yet one more flap, "All right! Oh awesome phoenix, whose feathers shine in the night, would you kindly bring your humble servant out of here and to safety?"

Sophie trilled happily, but did not move from his shoulder.

"Of course. Lazy subspecies of a turkey..." Harry mumbled, only to get yet another flap of wing against the back of his head. They walked in silence for a little bit, one muttering examples of how a loyal familiar should use the teleport ability to get the wizard to safety, while the other did her best impression of a flaming turkey. The stone corridor ended with a smooth wall that held a mosaic depicting a gorgon with yellow eyes, in front of which a few statues of men clad in old Roman armors stood with their mouths contorted into screams.

He furrowed his brow at the sight, before Sophie settled into a sad litany and departed from his shoulder, to smash her body against the statues and reduce them with said action to fine powder. The next instant, her beak hit the two eyes, destroying them in the process before flowing back on his shoulder.

"Were those...Basilisk eyes?" He asked, earning an affirmative chirp of reply. He shuddered before moving closer to the now eyeless

gorgon. Looking at the snakes perched on the woman's head, he hissed. "Open for Salazar! Mightiest of the Hogwarts' four!"

The gorgon's snakes retracted within the creature's head, before it began to slowly click and turn of one hundred and eighty degrees, before splitting in two and revealing a circular hole that seemed to proceed in the dark from there onwards.

"Shit." Harry cursed. "Hellish ring: you could have warned me beforehand! This exit works because Salazar was a snake animagus! How the hell am I going to..." He groaned. "Really? Slither through it? No. Hell no. It's tight. It's black. It's slimy. I'm not going."

Sophie cooed, before putting her head within the hole for a moment, and then removing it a second later. "Do you know that the answer remains no, Sophie? What is it with you and wanting me to trudge through the dark hole that might lead into the depths of hell? What if there's a turn upwards and I end up stuck, huh?"

"Chirp."

"I'm not going in there: get me out Sophie, please."

"Chirp." She deadpanned.

"Chirp-No. Chirp-Teleport."

A peck on the shoulder, and Harry 'Ow-ed'.

"Ow! Stop it!" He muttered, massaging his shoulder, "Alright...I'm going in..."

He groaned in frustration as his hands entered first, soon followed by the rest of his body. The hole was spacious enough to crawl his way through, as if he was a soldier doing those moves beneath the barbed wire. The old, stench filled air didn't make it easy to his nose, but as he trudged forward he could but hope the hole to be short.

"Off...we...go..." He mumbled, "Through...the...hole." He muttered. "If at the end of this, I end up in Dumbledore's hands...I swear to Merlin and to the gods: I'll kill Sophie with my own two hands." The chirp that came from behind him told him all that he needed to know

on what Sophie thought of mock death threats. "Laugh now! One day I'm going to force you through a meat grinder!" He snapped back with a sigh.

On a positive note, at least he wasn't nervous any more.

James Potter

"So you admit on the use of Obliviate, Gilderoy?" Albus asked kindly, but his eyes held that stern light so common in the old wizard when he really wanted something done quickly.

"Yes...But my work is always flawless! I swear nobody remembers...well, yes that's the purpose I suppose but...really, there are never after effects! I'm precise with it!"

"You disgust me Gilderoy." Filius growled, "A Ravenclaw such as yourself...to cheat in such a way..."

"But they didn't want the fame! So I took it from them...if you don't want the results of your work, then it's fine if another grabs it, right?" The man was pale as he tentatively tried to give his own view. They were in the Headmaster's office, interrogating Gilderoy and making sure to get all of his version of the facts out.

"So...did you perhaps come into contact with a diary, Gilderoy? A diary, written by a certain Tom Riddle? Perhaps...you gave it to Mr. Scamander one day?" Albus added. This was the crux of the defense. Gilderoy had it all: the means, the reasons, the ability and the opportunity. He was an old Ravenclaw and he had to be witty enough to get the password right every time. He had the Obliviate knowledge. He could have come upon the diary during his travels...and maybe he had wanted a piece of fame from the heir of Slytherin...or maybe Voldemort had even managed to possess him and then deliver himself to another.

"Huh? No." Gilderoy replied perplexed. "I didn't use any memory charm on any of the students, Albus! I know their effects! Sheesh: give me a bit of leeway! I wouldn't use them on the students around Hogwarts!"

Albus face morphed into an angry frown few seconds later.

"Should I call Severus and ask him for Veritaserum, Gilderoy? Tell me the truth."

James shivered. Albus was outright scary when he was angry. He had little doubts Gilderoy would cave in, but the question was on what he was being called upon...what had he done? Lily was luckily not in the room, having instead gone to help Lillian get over the shock of Hermione's situation. They hadn't told their daughter because they had hoped Gilderoy would solve everything...but as the situation went, if Gilderoy hadn't gotten the Diary into Hogwarts, then it was far more possible...that Hermione herself had.

"Maybe...a seventh year?" Gilderoy hazarded.

"You make me sick you ****!" Filius degenerated his tongue into old, really old, goblin speak. Many of those words appeared to be insults and from the tone the small man was actually using one would expect him to be cursing Gilderoy to a most painful type of death. Not that he was of a different opinion. Really? Seventh years were eighteen for the vast majority, so they weren't minors...but still to go as far as using one's own position? And at his age? He was thankful Lillian wasn't a seventh year, because otherwise he would have joined Filius in performing an ancient cursing ritual of some sorts.

Just to be on the safe side of course.

"And what of Miss Clearwater?" Albus asked carefully. "She is a sixth year, is she not?"

"What of her?" Gilderoy hesitantly tried a small chuckle.

"Albus!" Minerva exclaimed, entering the office in a hurry: which was bad, because for as long as James remembered, Minerva McGonagall had never been in a hurry all her life. "He escaped!"

"What?" Albus replied, "How did he..."

"He transfigured the floor and trapped the elf sent to spy on him, then he tricked Mr. Malfoy's elf into taking his stuff...but a phoenix appeared and took his trunk away for him! Albus: he's got a phoenix! He could already be on the other side of the planet by now!"

James eyes turned to see the Headmaster tremble in pure rage. It was rage: there was no other mean to describe the emotion that was clearly quaking through professor Dumbledore's entire body. The man was more than angry: completely furious.

"Minerva! How the bloody hell can a child escape from Hogwarts!? What is he, Merlin reborn?!"

James coughed as spit ended up stuck in his throat. Harry as Merlin reborn? Still better than Salazar he supposed, but the question remained: just how the hell did he manage...what if...

"No." James let out a loud groan, "NO!" He yelled. "Not Merlin reborn Albus! No...no..." He slumped against the wall shaking his head.

"James?" Albus asked, worriedly. "Is...Is something the matter?"

"Not Merlin reborn Albus..." James muttered, looking at the Headmaster with crying eyes, "but...Voldemort, reborn."

"Uhm...uh...So...I can leave?" Gilderoy asked hesitantly, after few minutes of shocked silence descended into the office.

"It...It fits...Oh my boy...my poor, poor boy." Albus whispered, shaking his head as tears began to fall from his face. "To go to such lengths..."

"That's not my son at all, is it?" James' voice turned harsher. "It's just a Horcrux with Voldemort within it controlling the body like a puppet."

"We'll have to warn the department for magical law enforcement then," the Headmaster replied, "Gilderoy." Albus added with a low growl, his hand already holding his wand, "I no longer have time to waste around. Legilimency!"

James turned to look at Minerva, who was now pale faced too, with a hand clasped around her mouth. The Scottish woman was trying very hard not to let anything more show, but it was clear that the revelation had shocked her to her very core.

"It appears Mr. Lockhart did not, in fact, Obliviate or otherwise attempt to tamper with Mr. Scamander's memory. However with the point that you have raised, James..." Albus whispered slowly, "We need to be on the lookout. As much as I hope we are just seeing yet another prodigy turned wrong, the point is...that you may be right, James: terribly right."

"Lily will be devastated." James whispered back, "And...Lillian too..." He clenched his eyes closed for a moment, before opening them again, "I'll...I'll tell them myself."

"Then go." Albus nodded, "Minerva, notify the ministry. Filius, call for all who knew Mr. Scamander in Ravenclaw: we need to find the boy! I'll have the school on lockdown and bring up all the wards...we know not what our enemy is capable of, so be careful!"

With bile rising to his very tongue, James hurried down the stairs from the Headmaster's office, soon followed by Minerva and Filius...yet the man's mind was elsewhere.

Maybe it was all a mistake? Maybe he was seeing too much in it. Maybe it was all a ploy, a...a sort of witch hunt of sorts. Harry...Harry had been training with Severus of all people...the man had to know something! He growled beneath his throat: he would get his answers from the greasy git eventually. For the moment, he had to move and get a hold of Lily, before the news could reach her or Lillian...sour pills were best taken with the family, after all.

Albus Dumbledore

"Gilderoy...I'm sorry you had to hear..." Albus began quietly, "Alas I tried to stop him, you must understand."

"Uh? What is it, Headmaster?" Gilderoy asked, strangely uneasy as thick chains of steel bound him to the chair.

"You see, I'm getting old and yet, yet Tom isn't. Tom is still going on to plunge the world into an era of darkness like never before." Albus whispered, "And I must stop him, Gilderoy. I have to."

"Albus, you're...umpfh! Humpfh! Hummm!" A gag made of cloth had appeared in the blond man's mouth, as Albus drew his wand nearer to him while holding upon a purple scarf with white flowers on it.

"I'm really sorry Gilderoy. You fought bravely and saved me from young Voldemort's attempt at killing me, but you died from his wretched curse, and Harry managed to escape with the sorting hat altogether...my greatest shame I admit...but not as great...and with far more reaching benefits I might add."

Gilderoy's eyes were now pleading, but nothing stopped Albus' wand from touching gently the tip of the blond haired man's forehead.

"I'm sorry. Forgive me, Ariana...Avada Kedavra!"

A flash of green light, a body slumped. A pain hissing its way through his body and then torn, removed, settled in the cloth that now was warm. The Scarf was his now. The Scarf was a part of him. He felt it. He knew it was his. He...He was no longer complete, but he could now live. He could now seek Tom. He could now fight him on even ground.

"Why did you have...to come back...Tom?" Albus whispered, slowly shaking his head as his wand conjured the magic that trashed a bit the office...scorching marks, holes in the robes, how many times had he done the same? How many times had he given the fault to Voldemort of crimes he had committed? This would be nothing less and nothing more...Just one part of the whole spin.

He was the hero of the Wizard world, and Voldemort was the evil of it. He would kill him himself this time however and become a hero...no, the hero. He'd become the hero destined to greatness...and with his power, he would show those filthy ugly and retched muggles that magic needs not to be feared by the hands of a tender young and sweet girl...but by those of an angry and bitter old wizened wizard bent on revenge.

He'd show them, or his name was no longer Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore.

Severus Snape

He had to give it to the boy: he really knew when to hold back. Had he not known the true extents of Harry's spell knowledge, he would have been as surprised as everyone else was. Escaping from

Hogwarts by transfiguring the warded walls themselves, knocking out the house elves and disappearing into the darkness...befitting of a true Dark Lord actually.

A Dark Lord with a phoenix, if the house elves were to be believed...of course that just went a long way to displeasing Dumbledore. He held little doubt the Headmaster would be furious, and because of that his own Occlumency shields were right up, even if he was acting paranoid, it was better than be discovered and be killed. He held little doubt he would be killed after all if his true allegiance was found out.

Still, the boy had disappeared. If he was in luck, the boy would follow his instructions and end up in the room of requirements, and from there head over to Hogsmeade, where he'd meet with him in time. If he was not in luck...then the boy was truly lost to only Merlin knew what secrets of Hogwarts.

He sincerely hoped the silence of the castle would end soon, because it had grown quite eerie not to hear the chatter of portraits or the clanking of armors. Peeves was the only one that every now and then sang something around the castle...the only thing Severus hoped was that the boy would get the hell over to Prince manor in the end. Not that he ever used that place, but if his employer had used the portkey done by him, and not another created on the spot because of paranoia or some secret second reason, than he had a really big basilisk back in the manor.

In retrospect, he should have suspected some people not to take the news calmly.

So when Sirius Black and James Potter began to hurl curses, pretty dark ones too, at him...He took the time to ascertain that indeed, the shining armor to his side had a pretty good shield.

"Dunderheads. The lot of them." He mumbled as the shield he had accio'ed wandlessly gave him enough time to take out his own wand.

"Would you mind explaining yourself you idiots!?" Severus snapped at the two men, who apparently were not in a listening mood.

"You had to know, Snivellus!" James yelled, "And now you're going to pay for it!"

"Oh for the love of Merlin! James! Sirius!" Lily's voice echoed from behind the two, and Severus swiftly deflected two more incoming curses.

"Stop it you two!" Lily yelled again, this time closer, "Leave Sev alone!"

This was a nice trip on memory lane...but Severus wasn't the type to be distracted by that, not when Sirius had apparently thought a 'vivisecting' curse was in order to keep his reflexes honed.

"Sirius! Stop! Put your wands down!" Lily yelled one last time, her own wand out, "Expelliarmus!" She yelled before any of the two dunderheads could fathom the thought. With a sigh of relief, he looked with a raised eyebrow at the three in front of him.

"So...what, pray tell, warrants trying to murder me in the hallway?"

"You knew that Harry...Harry..." James began, only to stop himself in slight croaks of pain, "You knew that he was possessed by Voldemort and you did nothing! He's turned into him now!"

Severus blinked once.

He had to give it to Dumbledore: he was good at creating dark lords out of thin air. Luckily he held his mind clear, or he would have groaned. How could Durmstrang be safe now, with the aurors after him? Thankfully he could plead for asylum elsewhere...Germany was out of question of course, but maybe Beauxbatons would be fine? Or the Universitatis in Italy...or maybe all the way down to Greece and the Parthenon? If that was off...

Still, he'd better warn his employer: this was starting to turn into one sticky situation.

So long for merely slipping the boy a portkey while he was in an empty compartment of the train back home!

With a long drawled breath, Severus prepared himself for the upcoming headaches. He just knew he wouldn't get any type of peace for the present time.

Author's notes

And we go with another chapter. The next chapter will deal with the after-shocks, escape going on, and reactions in general.

Yes, Albus is one mean son of a...

Gilderoy is clearly a depraved but that was known.

And Severus plan for letting Harry escape was...the most simple in absolute? Poor Severus. Life hates him.

Note that I am not a 'bashing' person. I portray things with just a bit of a different angle. Albus here is just...determined to have his 'justice' served. His justice being revenge, but people do worse thing for far less important reasons...And since 'Tom' is apparently back and young, and Albus is old and a bit 'losing gears' he needed a bit of a help in the form of a Horcrux.

A bit.

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 24

The hole was moldy and filled with a nauseous stench that filtered through his nostrils with ill-begotten easiness. The smell of rotten meat mixed with animal stench and sweat pilfered at Harry's nose with the strength of a sledgehammer. He had once smelled one of those stinky French cheeses, and yet this smell was deliriously far more horrendous. Not only was it worse, it also felt somehow familiar to him. Together with the whiffs of ugly and putrid vapors came also every now and then the small sounds of birds crowing, a tell-tale sign that the exit was nearing.

Harry did not know what was crawling along his body, together with him. He just hoped he wouldn't end up panicking before reaching the exit. Slowly he began to see his surroundings. The tunnel stretched a long way beneath the surface of the castle, and yet Harry kind of queried why Salazar couldn't have placed some sort of teleportation device instead of having to use tunnels for his escape plans. The wizard should have thought about the poor students who had to come and wanted out, not only about himself.

Harry chuckled grimly as with a final push he stopped to catch his breath. The stench was really reaching new levels of disgust, and he would have gagged, had the nervousness not completely blocked out his stomach from doing so. The tension that had disappeared after the friendly banter with Sophie was now back, weighing him down as every small movement forward he took felt heavier than before. In the silence of the tunnel, Harry had time to think.

What would he do after this? Where would he run to? Why had he run to begin with? He had the pocket watch of Salazar: he could have remained and passed safely through the interrogation, he knew it. Yet...of course, Veritaserum would have been given to him eventually, that concoction that actually sparked the myth of a 'truth' serum in real life working. The Americans actually were right: such a thing did not exist and it was useless to ask them for it. It was just a by-product of spy films.

Which was a pity, because as Harry began once more to crawl through the hole, he thought that all that he needed now was a gun,

and then he could enact a James Bond film. He had the golden pocket watch and the magical ring and locket...He was practically a spy entering a secret compound. Well, not as much entering it as leaving it of course.

His thoughts drifted to Lillian, the girl who had so much without thinking done what she believed was right: thus condemning him to escape for his life. He had little doubts Dumbledore wouldn't take any more chances with him. He just hoped that the mind of Salazar Slytherin, paranoid as he could be, and his ring to guide him, would be enough to get him out of there and into safety. Not that he had much of a choice after all. Finally, the tunnel apparently came to an end as Harry's hands touched nothing but air, a clear sign that whatever was at the end of the tunnel was but a dark cave or room of sorts.

He just hoped the floor was close, because he had no choice but keep crawling his way out by giving a final push against the sides of the circular exit, plopping out like a worm from the ground. His body fell on a musky and rotten pile of what he hoped to be leaves, or peanut butter. He really, really did not want it to be the expelled remains of eaten things. He could now hear the noise more clearly, and while in the pitch black darkness of the room he saw nothing, he knew that the sound was that of someone or something breathing.

A low grumble came from further down the room, soon followed by a small whiff of warm air. A set of jagged teeth as big as cars came into view in the end, flickering flames behind them giving enough light for Harry to see, to truly and utterly see...the sleeping dragon.

There was a dragon in the same room as him. The dragon, enormous and out of possibility for his mind to understand just how big it really was, was sleeping. Sleeping peacefully he might have added, but then the thing he had fallen in came into the fray. He had fallen on remains of eaten beasts. He had fallen on...corpses...melted flesh and bones and steel. The only things that made noise in the now more defined area, a cavernous pocket beneath the castle, were the drops of water that fell from the ceiling and the dragon's snores.

He just hoped nothing would change from that. He just hoped the dragon would keep sleeping as he carefully walked his way as far from the beast as possible. He didn't even dare use the Lumos spell,

in fear he might wake up the tons of claws and teeth that stood in the same room with him. Carefully, he was glad for the every now and then flicker of light that came from the snoring dragon: it made travelling through the messes of his previous victims easier, and probably would save him. He knew the ring was guiding him to the exit of the cave, he just hoped it wouldn't force him to move closer to the dragon in order to do so.

Few steps that resounded far louder than he thought they would, the terrible noise of his heart beating, the horrendous scrunching noise of when he mistakenly snapped a bone all remained fixedly in his mind as he reached for the seemingly perfect wall on the other side of the cave. The dragon still snored, and for that he was all the more gracious. Who the hell built a castle atop of a sleeping dragon to begin with!? And just how did Salazar manage to build his escape route through it without waking it up!?

Now, however, came the hard part. He had to speak to the smooth wall.

"Salazar Slytherin commands you: open, for the will of the greatest of Hogwarts' four." He meekly hissed at the wall which suddenly, with a rebounding and clunking noise, began to open. Harry let out a sharp cry of fear as his eyes fearfully turned back to stare at the dragon; if the noise awoke it...if the door didn't open faster...

His heart was thumping in his chest as he realized that the dragon wasn't moving, that it was still peacefully snoring deeply unaffected by the noise of the stone being moved to reveal the exit. Harry took a step backwards and then another, finding himself in the damp and moist surroundings of a cave as fresh air entered his nose and throat as a blessing. Yet the dragon kept on slumbering as the door began to close itself again, and as it did...

Harry could swear it upon his very own soul: the dragon's eyes had opened if for a brief moment and stared at his own. Golden slits of what felt like malevolence as scales of pure black and red glittered for briefly a second from the light of the cave he had ended up within.

Then the door closed and Harry, giving his back on the door, began to run. The cave's floor was tilted upwards, a clear sign that the exit had to be near. He was leaving caution to the winds as he ran, and that...that came back to him as with a startled jump he avoided the

lumping form of a sleeping troll. In his fright of the dragon, he forgot to check if the cave held any others inhabitants: the promise of freedom and fresh air, even if it was that of the Forbidden Forest, was far more than enough to make him remove inhibitions...and control. The troll he jumped past wasn't the only one in the cave however, and the second one had awakened from the noise.

With a bellowing roar, the behemoth of filth and muscles lunged forward with its hands, but missed Harry by the scruff of the neck as the boy kept running faster and faster. The exit was near and it did not matter to him what beasts he awoke behind him as he dashed for safety. His feet stopped clacking on the stone floor of the cave and began to instead press against the thick grass of the forest, while his hands moved low branches away as his legs swept the undergrowth. He did not stop until he was out of breath, his back pressed against a tree trunk and his nostrils dilating from the effort. His hands went to his knees as he took deep calming breaths.

He was out of Hogwarts.

He had escaped.

Now he just had to make to Hogsmeade. Carefully, he unclasped his invisible cloak and placed the invisibility cloak on top of it, covering his face with the cowl of the cloak. Now invisible, Harry began his slow trudge towards the village near Hogwarts. Knowing where the village was would have been better, but he didn't doubt that eventually Sophie would appear again to lead him out. Barring her arrival, all he had to do was keep as inconspicuous as possible within the forest and pray to eventually find a snake to ask direction from.

It was luckily still day-light, and thanks to that he was still able to orient himself. The trolls' caves were in the outer layers of the forest, so if he did manage to reach for the grasslands, his orienting would become far easier. As adrenaline left him however his muscles began to feel weak. He felt tired, and a throbbing headache was slowly making itself known as he took yet another step. Fatigue and fright had taken their tolls on him after all, but it wasn't as if he could just curl up and fall asleep in the forest, of all places.

The forest was filled with noises, from chirping birds to rustling leaves because of the wind. The undergrowth cracked satisfactorily

beneath Harry's shoes as he walked along a narrow path in the forest, probably one of those that nature itself built when many animals usually trekked along it. Harry carefully wetted his lips as he realized how thirsty he actually was. Luckily he had eaten lunch before being carried away into the cell that had held him for barely half an hour.

Harry's gaze finally saw flicker of green through the giant sparse trees that separated him from the grasslands of Scotland, and in the following five minutes that seemed like hours, the boy's legs brought him out of the Forbidden forest and into the knee-tall grass so common around those parts. From where he was, he could see in the distance the chimneys of Hogsmeade letting out their billowing smokes, and the road that seemingly proceeded into the forest while in truth merely brought one to an apparition circle that would lead people in the castle.

Harry blinked. That knowledge seemed awfully recent for having belonged to the ring of Salazar himself. Yet he didn't bother trying to find a reason for it. Maybe the ring had some sort of updating feature with things related to Hogwarts, thus who was he to question its knowledge, when it had just helped him escape?

His steps took him to the road quickly, as shadows loomed over the fields. They belonged to wizards and witches perched on broomsticks, probably on the look-out for him. They probably hadn't thought he could make himself invisible with the cloak, or maybe if they did they did not possess any sort of spell to see beneath it for him. He was, basically, undetectable by them.

His steps along the cobbled road were unstoppable as he entered the bustling village that had aurors in robes actually go around hanging pamphlets with a picture of him making strange frowns and gestures. He wondered where they got the picture, but then again maybe they just painted one with some sort of magic machine. The time it had taken him to leave the castle had been enough for the Aurors to mobilize, apparently. Wearing brown trench-coats, probably their uniform, they swept through the village banging open pubs and doors warrants in hand.

To have that much manpower to move only for him...wasn't it a bit excessive? What did they think he had done? Murder someone?

It was then that his eyes went to what was written on one of the pamphlets and the blood left his entire body.

"Harry Scamander.

Wanted for murder of Gilderoy Lockhart, assault on the Supreme Mugwump and Wizengamot seat holder Albus Dumbledore. Wanted for hiding Dark Artifacts and hindering the Aurors. He has escaped the prisons of Hogwarts and is deemed extremely dangerous. He is known to command a Basilisk and is a Parseltongue. He is known to possess extremely ruthlessness and cunning. He stands accused of helping in the murders of Colin Creevey and Ernest MacMillan. He is a natural Occlumens. Immediately warn the nearest Auror or security if sighted, he is to be captured alive..." Harry held his breath as the last words trickled in, "if that is not possible, self-defense may warrant his death."

The...They were looking for him...for...murder? He...He was accused of murder? He had met the man once! Only once! There...there was no way people would believe that stuff was there? He grimaced, before walking his way through the village. He was invisible, and thus it was he who had to dodge people walking around. It wouldn't do to end up hitting against someone else. Strangely, he didn't even feel bad at entering the nearest shop of sweets and coming out with two butterbeers carefully hidden on his body.

He was being accused of murder after all. Theft was really nothing compared to it. He placed himself in a nearby alley, behind a bunch of wooden crates that probably belonged to one of the shops on either sides of the alley, and then he carefully uncorked one of the bottles and drank. The taste was like that of cream soda, and it went down smoothly soothing his parched throat. He drank half of the content avidly, before sipping the other half slowly.

Once done, he dropped the bottle behind the crates and left in the direction of the outer ring of Hogsmeade: he'd return once night had come, and thanks to that he'd be more than able to enter into a pub and get at the very least a spot to sleep in the cellar...if not outright pilfering food from the kitchen. It all seemed like one of those adventures the kids in books went through: hiding from the law, fighting evil overlords, becoming powerful and defeating said evil overlord. The only problem was that they never explained how much

feet could hurt after running for an entire day, how much a body could spasm in fear or how much pain one could feel from the throbbing headaches.

They never explained that in books. The butterbeer rolled with a little clank down the alley and Harry had barely walked a few steps that soft pops echoed near him. He barely turned around to see the back of a trench-coat wearing auror pointing his wand in front of him...thus luckily not at Harry. Next to the man, a few others had surrounded the alley's exit, and one of them neared the fallen butterbeer bottle with his wand pointed at it.

"He was here..." The man held a glass eye that twirled around, as he sniffed the tip of his already drank bottle, "Recently too."

"He disappeared?" The voice belonged to the young woman Harry remembered from the first visit: Tonks was her name if he recalled correctly. However her hair had changed colors, and she vaguely resembled the woman he had seen in passing sitting by the bench near the fountain of Hogsmeade.

She could change her appearance then: just what he needed, magic that could change appearance and magic that could track him down. They had immediately converged on the butterbeer, but...Harry's thought process halted: they had not converged on him. His cloak...his cloak kept those spells away. He thanked whatever god had granted him the invisibility cloak, because without it he doubted he would have taken even a single step outside of the castle's wards.

"He's what? Twelve? How could he know?" The deep voice belonged to the third auror, a dark skinned man with a dark blue robe. "You aren't buying Dumbledore's words right Alastor? Merlin helps us if he's right but really...it's far-fetched as it is."

"Then tell me, Kingsley: how does a twelve year old escape Auror patrols, Auror checkpoints, reaches Hogsmeade, buys a butterbeer and then disappears and we only find this here!?" The man known as Alastor bellowed, "Constant Vigilance! I say no twelve year old can do this...I'll be damned but Dumbledore's right. This kid's pretty much Voldemort reborn..." The old man snarled, "And he managed to fool me once. I knew I should have apprehended him that day when I met him first. Always with that stupid grin of a smile on his face, but no...I trusted Potter of all people to keep an eye on him."

Emotive of a fool went soft on him and look now: we've got the frigging Dark Lord reborn out and about!"

"What do we do now then, sir?" Tonks asked, "He's unlicensed: there's no way to track his apparition destination."

"We wait and expect him to do magic and hope he hasn't removed the trace from his wand, but if he's really Voldemort reborn then there's a fat chance he's already off the radar." Alastor muttered, spitting a blob of saliva to the side.

"Ew, Alastor!" Tonks exclaimed in disgust, "So we've got a Dark Lord with a sweet tooth?"

"Probably," Kingsley mused over, "the kid is still in there? He's forcing the spirit to give him stuff to keep him calm...maybe we could still save him."

"Probably, but I don't work with probabilities Kingsley." Alastor snapped back, "We find him, we start the stunners and hope to Merlin he's not really the Dark Lord reborn...I lost a leg to the fucker in the last war."

"So what now?" Tonks asked after a few seconds of silence passed in the trio.

"Tonks, contact headquarters and have them look through the international portkeys. If anything has Scamander's magical signature on it then I want you to get it and reroute it. And if anything, anything at all moves from the castle's grounds I want it stopped, checked through every hole you can fathom and then kept on a tight watch from that moment onwards! Nothing leaves this spot until we have confirmation that Scamander's truly gone, understood!?"

"Yes sir!" Tonks sarcastically muttered, before disappearing with a sound crack.

"Kingsley," Alastor hissed as soon as Tonks was gone, "I didn't tell Tonks but hear me out: the guy's dangerous. When stunners start flying...Dumbledore wants us to get the killing on."

"Alastor..." The dark skinned man mumbled back, "That's not how it works."

"Constant Vigilance Kingsley! He's a rotten apple...you don't want it to spread to others." The mad man snarled back, before starting to wobble away. The dark skinned man remained still for a few minutes, before walking in the opposite direction.

Harry finally let out the breath he had been holding inside of him. He knew he had to make his way to the cellar of the Hog's Head eventually, but at the present he just needed to walk and clear his head a bit. His steps brought him once more near the fountain at the center of the village, where just about then the flow of traffic was trickling down. He sat near the edge of the fountain, waiting as he held the second butterbeer in his hand. Did he dare try?

Apparently, the cloak was the only thing standing between been captured, somehow the invisibility applied to everything of his body, and thanks to that he was safe. Safe but not yet in a safe place...he mentally groaned as he stood up and began trekking towards his destination. The sooner he got where he was meant to be, the sooner he'd be all right. If Severus wasn't of the same idea as the Headmaster of course...what if the man believed him a murderer? Then wouldn't he lead the Aurors at the Hog's Head? No. Doing that would mean revealing himself as a spy at the very least with Dumbledore...and he wouldn't do that. So maybe he'd come...only to silence him?

He was invisible, so he knew he'd be able to catch him by surprise given the occasion. He couldn't just walk around Hogsmeade without a reason after all. A cellar was a better place to sleep at least. The only problem was finding the inn from the outside, but just as the light of the sun started to wane, he got lucky. The dingy wooden signpost hanging from a perilous looking metal bar was all he needed to read to enter a fummy and dingy place. The door closed behind him quickly, Harry walked swiftly out of the way of the few patrons in the room. The gruff looking owner of the establishment growled softly, muttering something about wind and hinges, before returning to polish his glass.

Harry waited in the corner of the first floor, near the fire pit, while eying with his mouth watering the people eating. He had to wait before grabbing a bite. At the very least until the man manning the counter went in the kitchens, or until he opened the cellar. He'd

rather be in the cellars on an empty stomach than trapped in the kitchen and risk missing Severus.

"Aberforth!" A voice exclaimed from the fire, as the figure of Albus Dumbledore, of all people, emerged from it in an uncanny haste. "It's urgent! We need to talk!" The old wizard hastily said, walking all the way towards the counter. The man behind it stopped cleaning his glass with ease, gently plopping it on the wooden surface, before turning his uncanny gaze towards the Headmaster.

"Here?" Aberforth asked.

"In the cellars, it's urgent. You-Know-Who might be back!" The noise around the room soon came to a startled end as every single one of the patrons of the bar and diner stopped eating to watch like hawks at the two at the counter. In that moment, Harry moved silently towards the cellar's door. If he was quick enough...

The man behind the counter dropped his right hand strongly against the counter's surface, growling as he did. "Albus. Have you finally gone senile?"

"Aberforth, please." This had to be an act, Harry decided. It was possible that the...wait a moment.

The Headmaster was delivering the speech in public to make sure people heard and talked. Just like Adolf spoke to people in bars so too did Albus. Soon, all of Hogsmeade would know that somehow the Dark Lord might be back, and if they venerated the 'girl who lived' because she survived the killing curse, then...then who was he to say how far reaching these consequences would go?

"No." The old man stubbornly refused. "Out with you Albus, out." The Headmaster stilled for a moment, and then, as if it pained him, he left from the Floo. The man behind the counter, the one known as Aberforth, walked briskly towards the fire and extinguished it. Then he hurriedly walked towards the cellars and unlocked them, entering while leaving the door wide open. Since Harry was not one to look at a gifted horse by the mouth, he quickly scampered behind the old man. The cellar was moldy but spacious, a window overlooked the road above and barrels of wine stood in the corner. Harry didn't as much as move a muscle as Aberforth quickly left a few seconds later,

bottle of red wine in hand and closing the door with a slam behind him.

Harry took a deep calming breath. He was safe for the moment. Working up his courage, he moved closer to one of the shelf that appeared to be holding dried food. Things like hams and sausages hanged from the ceiling, probably kept from going rotten by magic, since it wasn't actually the best place to put food: the dust was at least one inch thick all around. Carefully, he snapped off one handful of sausage, soon followed by the pilfering of bits and pieces of cheese. Hiding behind the wine barrels, he slowly began to eat.

His stomach filled and exhausted from the day, Harry fell asleep few seconds later, perfectly covered by the invisibility cloak on him. All he had to do know was wait for Severus...if he ever came, or for Sophie...who had to tell him why she thought it a brilliant idea for him to actually 'run' through it all. She could have teleported him there outright...at least he suspected she had to have had a second, deeper reason...as always with magic involved.

Lillian Potter

She was barely in sight of the Gryffindor's portrait, finally thinking about the chance to fall asleep after the events of the day, when she realized with a startled shock that the portraits of Hogwarts were empty. No ghost hovered around the castle and the doors all opened by merely pushing them. The creepiness of it all was made all the more apparent when the doors still closed behind her without the need for her to pull them, and yet as the stairways moved to bring her closer to the Gryffindor tower she hadn't realized it. It had taken her reaching for the Fat Lady to come to terms with the fact that there was no Fat Lady to begin with.

"Valor?" She said the password to the portrait, in hope for it to open up as usual. It did not. The portrait didn't swing at all. "Is anyone there?" She asked worriedly, "Can anyone open the door!?" She yelled with a bit of a fright. The castle's walls were filled with the flickering lights of torches, and it was a clearly dark looking aspect now that she could think about it calmly: there was no happy chatter of silly nonsense from the portraits and the silence was deafening in its own right.

In the end, she tried to pry the portrait from the wall and move it aside. Unthinkingly...it worked. The portrait slid off, revealing the hole from which all students had to crawl through as per normal. Yet this wasn't normal. The castle should have shown a blank wall to her, not the space beyond. In this way anyone could enter without a second thought!

As she hesitantly entered the common room, she was met with a stern silence and with few people talking in groups, some playing chess and others muttering far more harshly than before.

Lillian hesitantly walked, her right hand circling her chest and moving up and down on her left arm, towards Ron who was apparently playing chess with another Gryffindor, Lee Jordan, an older boy and friends with Ron's twin brothers.

"Ehi Ron." She began hesitantly. "Where's the Fat Lady?"

"She's gone." Ron replied stiffly, "Like everyone else." The red haired boy muttered something else that Lillian didn't catch.

"What is it, Ron? I didn't understand you." Lillian asked perplexed.

"The...there's going to be some nasty can of worms to eat soon." Ron said a bit more strongly, "The other houses, some of the idiots still believe in your brother, you know?"

Her brother. Hearing that actually made her heart pain a little. For her, the memories of talking to him with the basilisk nearby were a thing of the day before and yet...yet he had been under the Imperius, it had to be the only reason! She didn't want to believe her father. For him, her brother was dead and consumed by Voldemort himself: but she wouldn't stand for it. She'd get him back.

"He's...He's just being controlled by the Imperius." Lillian stuttered as she spoke, "When that will be off...I asked my parents not to press my charges. I know he wasn't in control of what happened."

"You've got guts at saying that." A voice interrupted her, and as she turned she looked at Lavender Brown, strolling forward from her seat. "If it hadn't been for you that monster would have fooled us all: now we're pretty sure he was behind everything that happened this year...he should be in Azkaban, not poor Hermione."

Lillian meekly averted her gaze.

"Still...he had to be under the Imperius curse too! He wouldn't have..."

"Lillian, your brother was a psycho." Ron interrupted her, "Really. I know it's hard to admit it, especially when it's family, but he was clearly psychotic: do you know that last year he tried to kill me in the hallways? I mean, what more do you need!?"

"You were following him!" Lillian snapped back, "He just defended himself!"

"Maybe you're just trying to see something that isn't there." Lavender slowly said, "Look, I know it's hard and I know you don't want to think about it...but what if Ron is right? He's a cold blooded murderer, and it's far more probable he used the Imperius himself on poor Hermione."

"Where's your proof!?" Lillian yelled back, growing heated with the discussion, "I'd like you to try and keep your wits when you have to live with being the Heir of Slytherin and get through all that bias!"

"Calm down!" Percy Weasley exclaimed, standing up from his seat. "The discussions in the common room are accepted, as long as they are kept within..."

And then the door of the portrait swung open, and Seamus Finnigan walked in.

"Look who's here tonight." One of the Gryffindors chuckled. "Seamus! How kind of you to come back here...finally tired of taking it up the ass from your King?"

The last word was spat out with venom, but the boy didn't even think of replying, instead heading towards the dormitory. Lillian saw the Irish boy give her just a brief look, before heading off without a word.

"Hey now! We're not done talking with you!" Cormac, another second year, walked over to where Seamus was on the stairs and grabbed him by the arm. "Come down here and tell us again of Hogwarts unity under your Dark Lord!"

"Go to hell Cormac." Seamus snapped back, only to be pushed against the stairs by the other boy.

"Why don't..."

"Stop it!" Percy, in his full Prefect tenure, moved forward to try and separate the two.

"Oh come on Percy! He's getting his worth for all his strutting around!" Ron yelled as he moved in front of his older brother. In doing so, however, Lillian was able to see just what Cormac was trying to do with Seamus. The Irish boy was repeatedly punched in the guts by the one, and as Lillian held to herself a cry, another Gryffindor soon joined the stomping and kicking of the younger one.

"Leave him alone!" Lillian exclaimed: her face pale as her wand was in her hand in a few moment.

"Sod off! We're Gryffindors! Let's take care of this Dark Lord minion!" Another voice bellowed, and soon, even though Percy was also trying his best together with a few more sensible of the house of the brave, Seamus Finnigan was dumped out of the common room together with his stuff, broken and his nose bleeding.

Lillian merely watched with her arms numb at her side. She dashed upstairs in a hurry, hoping to forget the horrible scene she had to watch. As she closed the curtain of her bed, still dressed, her face burrowed into her pillow as she cried herself to a bitter sleep.

At least in her dreams, she could have a fun and grand second year at school with her brother, and nobody and nothing was harming either of them or of the school students. Everyone was happy...yes. That was what dreams were for after all...to bring happiness to people.

So she slept, falling asleep after crying her heart out.

After all, the only thing she could pray for was for her brother to come back alive and dispossessed...but if it happened, she'd be damned if she left Voldemort have its way again with her brother. If the Dark Lord was really returning, then she'd fight too: to get her family back in one piece.

She had defeated the Dark Lord once after all...how difficult could a second time be?

Lord Voldemort

"My lord," Lucius Malfoy spoke to his ears, kneeling down like the good subordinate he was, "He escaped."

"Excellent." The man chuckled as he gently caressed the head of Nagini. He had been reluctant to let this part of his soul come alive. After all he had needs for the snake in question, and he didn't want to lose one of his familiars so soon without the possibility to have another in return.

"He has managed to avoid detection at present my Lord." Lucius commented. "Even Severus has been unable to find him."

"Of course." Voldemort chuckled, "I marked him as my equal, Lucius. I highly doubt just anyone could find him." His thoughts drifted to that occasional dark thought concerning the prophecy...him, defeated by a toddler? Pitiful...but it had happen after all if he had awoken. He merely began to gaze at the stone inserted within the Gaunt ring with a small smirk. Foolish child...Regulus should have been more careful in hiding his trail. He had taken the locket and the ring, and yet the ring had consumed his will and killed him.

He should have been thankful however for such a thing to happen: he had been brought back a little short after his 'demise'. Now, with his new body...yes, he'd do things more subtly. His men had already been prepared after all, subjected to the Imperius by him, and with a hefty sum to the one administering the Veritaserum and the one asking the questions...their crimes had all but been annulled.

Now...

Voldemort's right hand moved a perfectly white pawn made of stone upon the chessboard. It was a simple toy, really. Yet it was extremely nostalgic to him. The first toy of his life, after all, wasn't something to disdain. Sure, it was muggle made...but even then...

"Now we wait Lucius." Voldemort mused, "We wait for the first move, but whom, I wonder, will take up the black pieces?" The silence

seemed to stretch uncomfortably for a few minutes, as the ticking of the clock in the office was all that was heard in the room, every now and then accompanied by the hissing noises of Nagini.

"I...I don't know my Lord."

"Of course you don't, it wasn't a question to begin with." Voldemort smiled.

Lucius hesitantly returned the smile, and as Voldemort chuckled, so too did the pale haired Death Eater do the same. He'd fool a bit around with Lucius, before letting him go. His fun was so...limited, in these times.

"Why are you laughing, Lucius?" Voldemort suddenly snapped, and looking at the shocked face of the Malfoy head of the house, he smirked. "I think a reminder of your position is in order, Lucius..."

"My Lord I..."

"Crucio."

Author's notes

And another chapter goes. We're nearing the end. Next chapter will probably be the last of the second 'book'. Let's hope all ends well after all!

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals

Chapter 25

The noise of soft steps on the ground woke Harry up with a muffled groan. Quietly, the escaping boy peered cautiously from behind the barrels, his gaze settling on the cloaked figure that stood in the middle of the room. His face hidden behind the cowl so typical of a monk, it gently dropped on the ground a small and round pebble, of those one find in the streams of rivers usually.

"This." The Voice explained slowly to the empty room, "Is a portkey for safety." The figure added. "It is still not the time for you to meet me," the Voice whispered, "And I suppose your trust is fleeting. However, what I hope is for you to merely live your life in normality: take the pebble, pronounce the word Activate, and you will find yourself out of Britain, out of troubles, and hopefully ready to start a new life."

Harry slowly walked out from behind the barrels, trying to get at least a face from the person beneath the cowl. He knew that the voice was the same as that of the man he had heard in the forest, yet now he was clad in those covering clothes and with that dark looking cloak...As he finally neared the man, he disappeared in a wisp of smoke before he could look at the face of his 'savior'.

The pebble was on the floor now, shiny and gleaming as if it had just then been plucked from the nearest river. Could it really be a portkey to safety? He gently touched it and held it with his right hand. It felt lukewarm to the touch, but the question was: could he trust the man? If he couldn't...then what were his choices? Go back to the castle? He knew all too well what he could do and what he couldn't. The only thing he hoped was that, whatever the 'magical' signature was, it wouldn't detect him under the cloak.

So, grabbing the pebble and holding it tightly, he whispered the word.

"Activate."

And then the world began to spin.

Lillian Potter

Morning breakfast was done in contemptuous silence. Seamus was sitting together with a few of the Ravenclaws since that 'night' at the common room, while the Hufflepuffs were clearly separated by an invisible line somewhere at three fourth of it. Slytherin appeared to be still giving off an united front vibe, but they were once more all on four different tables, and apparently the golden H of Hogwarts no longer was displayed anywhere. With the beheading of the 'King of Hogwarts' the rest of his men had fallen like flies easily.

She felt sick at comparing her brother with a beheaded snake. Lessons would resume normally, but do to the high level of stress incurred the exams wouldn't be done that year, except Owls and Newts of course. The Headmaster was sporting heavy eye bags, as if he hadn't closed his eyes a moment the night before. Yet, in the midst of an apparently normal breakfast, she saw a red haired teen stand up from his seat at the Ravenclaw table, and 'clink' against the glass to garner the attention of the other students.

"It's been one hell of a year." The red haired teen said, "For one thing, the Weasley twin pranked what? Ten times in all? Seven?"

"Five!" Fred or George bellowed from his seat, "And those were warranted!"

"And then we had the heir of Slytherin, a Basilisk, a serial killer...we even had an escape from Hogwarts by a second year who is considered 'The second coming of Voldemort'. My...what a year." The prefect shook his head slowly, "Makes you wonder, doesn't it? A club meant to unite the school, led by a boy who was nothing more than a psychopathic murderer and a devious abuser of the trust others poured in him. Makes you wonder...really, it makes you ask yourself: can you trust the person next to you? Can you trust your friends, family and the people you share your room with? What if...what if one of them is a murderer too? What if one of them is an evil person?"

"Mr. Sfor, please get to the point." Albus said slowly, his voice tired.

"Of course Headmaster, I tend to dillydally around while speaking." Sfor, as the Headmaster had now named him, replied.

"However what I wish to say is this: just because the man at the head is evil, that does not make the ideals behind the man evil itself.

Work, safety and family...those beliefs you will find equally among the Nazis, the Fascists, the Communists, the Liberals, the Democrats and everyone else. Because the right ideas are always there, always good to be used: it's the color they don that makes some people stupidly think they shouldn't be taken. The color does not matter: what matters is if it works or not." Then the Ravenclaw student sat back down in silence, his speech given.

"Mr. Sfor...is there a point in your speech?" The headmaster asked, his tone apparently perplexed.

"There is." Sfor replied, "For those who wish to see it."

When no other words came by, breakfast ended rather quickly afterwards. Lillian found herself surprised at walking through the corridors of Hogwarts without Hermione around. She was disgusted by the sympathetic looks sent her way, but most importantly...she felt disgusted with herself. She had cried herself to sleep! She had to be strong, for Hermione and for her own brother. There was no other way around: her brother would need a shield when he would, inevitably, come back to Hogwarts.

In her mind there simply was no way he wouldn't be saved. Eventually Dumbledore would win together with her parents and her family would be one, whole and happy. That was how tales ended: with the happy end. She'd make sure of that by taking on her brother's idea...A united front at school. Maybe not something so drastic, and maybe not with the same type of people...of course! She'd ask the Gryffindors if they wanted to do something about their house situation.

Maybe she could get them to work their way into the Hufflepuffs good graces once more, maybe a talk or two with the Weasley twins with Ron helping her...She'd carry on her brother's dream.

Draco Malfoy

There the girl-who-lived went, strutting as if she owned the damn place. The place that was meant to be rightfully theirs! Of the outcasts, the forgotten, the left alone. Harry's words had always struck true and more and more had flocked to the idea of a single Hogwarts united under a single banner. He himself had never even once doubted who was meant to hold that banner high, and just like

him so too Vincent and Gregory had soon seen the same thing as him.

They had seen right. If some people thought that 'the second coming of the Dark Lord' was to be seen in a negative light, then they would be wrong. The Dark Lord had stemmed the tides of change effectively in the decaying society of purebloods, even against unwavering belief that he was wrong. Yet now a second coming came with the exact opposite words and the same charisma? It was not a negative thing. It was positive.

He had never thought he would stray that far from his father's thoughts, he had never even believed it until he had ended up speaking about the preparations for the New Year's feast. He had been asked to invite Harry...and when he had learned the reason he had done his best to fake his refusal to participate. He hadn't even known if Harry had been privately asked by his mother or his father, but he did know something else, something that had forced him to keep his mouth shut in front of Harry.

The diary, the so called diary that had possessed Hermione Granger and that now had seemingly been all a ploy by Harry...he had known of one such thing held within the confines of his house. He knew...he knew because his father had gloated to him of the possession of such artifact. He knew because when the word had come out an owl had arrived from his mother, of all people, to refuse any journal thrust in his hands. He knew because, deep down throughout all the second period of school...

He had known who the real culprit was.

Yet he had been wrong, so completely and utterly wrong. It had taken him only a glance, really, to realize just what happened and who the real culprit of the events was.

And when he had seen...he wished he had not.

He hadn't believed until the New Year eve, he hadn't believed until that man had spoken about the business transaction in such a way...in such a way that it made so much sense for it to mean something else entirely. He felt sick realizing they had all been used for some ploy that had ended up with no sure way to denounce a culprit and no sure way to save the innocents.

And in the midst of it all...

He smiled at Tracey and he smiled at Ginny, who had yet to warn her mother of her house change, and he smiled at the others students near him who spoke of sticking to values and he smiled again and again. Because if he did not smile, he didn't know how long he'd go without screaming.

Neville Longbottom

His grandmother had written to him kindly, for once praising him in having seen how the waters were and having chosen carefully. He was kind of surprised actually: his grandmother was usually sparse with her words of praise, and more often than not she tended to do unnecessary things that ended up embarrassing him. Like giving him a remembrall in the first year, and pointedly delivering another one when the first one was nicked after his accident on the broom.

The second one had to have broken recently however, because it kept being a strong mean red color every time he touched it: even when he was sure he hadn't forgotten anything! Still, he was glad he hadn't associated with Harry's 'club'. It had turned out his instincts had been right all along: the boy had been staging the attacks together with the others...and he knew pretty well that Hermione had stayed together with the others, albeit she did not enter their club.

That had to be a clearly staged prop to make sure the attacks wouldn't have ended up connected to him. It made him disgusted with the boy, to even think he had ordered an innocent to slaughter like that. After these events...Neville had no choice. All bets were off and all promises forgotten: Bellatrix Scamander would pay for what she did.

"Can I talk to you for a moment, professor?" The boy asked, knocking on the door to his head of the house. He knew what he had to do after all, and even if his witness would amount to nothing, he'd feel better with himself. He wouldn't let the torturer of his parents walk away scot-free: not if he had a say in it.

Lily Potter

She had gone back home to the Potter's manor to rummage through the stuff up in the attic. She knew she shouldn't have been skipping on work, but she was pretty sure Dumbledore would cover for her somehow. Right about then, all that she wanted was to find something that belonged to her son. At least something that would help her remember him as he was meant to be, and not as he had become. She hadn't even had the time to check during the second year, too busy with Lillian being petrified and too worried about the school's situation.

Now, however, she had time. As she carefully moved aside yet another cardboard box, thankful to magic that kept the dust away, she finally found what she had been looking for. Lillian's baby stuff had been packed together with tears, she remembered herself and James all teary eyed about their baby growing up happy and healthy. Yet now instead of bringing back to her a slight feeling of happiness, all it did was to plunge her deeper in despair.

She just couldn't help it: she had to compare the life of her daughter to that of her son, and as she did fantasize she couldn't help the sickening feeling that no, her sister hadn't treated him well at all. 'Freak' she had called him, and her husband had been even worse. She just cringed at the thought of her baby boy being mistreated, or even abused...she should have another chat with Petunia, one day...just to make things clearer.

The Fidelius charm had worked all too well...even while looking through Lillian stuff there was nothing that belonged to Harry within it. There was really only one thing left for her to do actually: head over to Godric's hollow, and hope to find something somewhere.

She disappeared with a soft pop, and she reappeared soon after within the small wizardry town that had been the resting spot of Godric Gryffindor in his final moments. The sky was a soft grey color, probably to announce an incoming storm. As she trudged along the path that would lead her to the monument for the fallen of the war against Voldemort, since it was along the road, she couldn't help but think back at those times.

The memories of fear, fear not for herself but for her children, came back vividly as she remembered having to practically beg James off going to work at least five times a day. Yet someone had to fight the Dark Lord, and someone had to win against him. When it turned out

it had to be Lillian and they had moved there...she had pleaded with her husband to leave the country. To get away, to grow their children elsewhere, maybe in America or someplace far like Brazil, where Voldemort had yet to arrive.

Instead they had stayed there. James had foolishly decided they would stay and fight on English soil...and because of that, she lost one of her precious children to Voldemort first, and then to her side of the family afterwards, and then once more to that whore of a Scamander...and in the end, she had lost him completely. She just wanted something to remember him by, and as she walked straight to where the monument was, she couldn't help but look through the mild charms for the muggles and see beyond what it displayed.

There were statues on the monuments, statues that lightly moved with their wands out in the usual displays of valor and grace. There were Molly's brothers, and the other members of the Order of the Phoenix who had died during the war. A gentle looking woman holding a child was the statue to represent the innocent children that had died.

As she could feel her lineaments soften at the sight of the small baby, being cradled by the mother, her eyes suddenly bulged out in shock.

The baby's face...

It was Harry's.

"Death shall be met as a brother at the end of the journey of life."

The words etched upon the monument had been placed there as a reminder that their sacrifice had not been in vain, and that they had not gone to their deaths without purpose. Yet...why was Harry's face on the monument? She hadn't remembered ever giving her permission, had she?

Who had placed her son's face there, as a cruel reminder of what she had and would never have again?

Who had dared!?

Hermione Granger

"Dumbledore will get you out." She repeated meekly to herself, standing in a corner of her cell; her wonderful small and dingy and humid cell...her clothes in rags and nothing else. She was curled in a ball in the furthest away corner, hoping to whatever god existed to keep the Dementors away from her. She felt them come and she felt them leave, but she never raised her head from her legs.

She had no recollection of what had happened. One moment she was walking in Diagon Alley with her parents, and the next she was in a cell in Azkaban, holding her legs in fright and fear and hoping to all the powers that existed not to be kissed. She had been taken out of there of course; she had been taken out for her process. Dumbledore had tried to get her out, the kind old headmaster of Hogwarts had tried and...he had failed.

For something that was not her fault, for something she hadn't wanted to do, she was condemned to serve her sentence in Azkaban...a sentence to life. Following the verdict, her parents' memory had been modified, removing everything of her or of the wizardry world from their head. She no longer had a family waiting for her on the other side now. She had cried and screamed, but it had been useless...the Aurors' were stronger than her, and what was she? Only a weak twelve years old.

She had tried to take her life away the very next hour, she had tried to do the day afterwards too...yet the Dementors were there. They, those monsters of decay and death and despair whose touch had made her will to die inside had warned the aurors every time. Now...now she was there shivering and trembling as yet another Dementor passed by her cell. She was going to die in there, and as long as she did not eat, then maybe she would die sooner.

"Squit." A voice came to her from the ground. Hermione's eyes moved downwards, to where a rat was standing there looking at her food.

"I'm not hungry." Hermione replied bitterly. She had longed for human contact and a bit of a speech with someone...at least the rat could listen, could he?

"Squit!" The rat's head bonked against the surface of the plate, insisting in some sort of way for her to eat it.

"I'm not hungry, stupid rat." Hermione muttered back, lowering her head once more against her knees and hoping the pesky creature would leave.

"You should eat." The voice startled her with a cry, and if for a moment, the sight she came to was of a balding man that seemed to be in his late forties, before it suddenly returned to the semblance of a rat just as a Dementor passed by the cell.

Hermione pressed herself tighter into a ball, as she could feel the Dementor's gaze hovering over her cell. She heard the guard screech in its usual low key voice some mumbled words that made no sense to her ears, and then leave after a few seconds. She breathed in relief as her eyes settled once more on where the rat had been seconds before. He wasn't there any longer, but the food still was.

Cautiously her fingers held onto the bowl of cold broth that had probably been made with the sea water. It wasn't warm...and her wand had been snapped so she couldn't heat it...but she gulped it down without thinking or smelling it. Just like when taking a medicine. At least now she had something to live up to, at least till the next day: the mystery of who the rat was.

Ginny Weasley

She didn't know who had told her mother. She just knew someone had. The letter, bright purple, arrived at the desk of the Slytherin table delivered by the family owl. She cringed and made a single whimper as it began to fume, menacing to explode open if it wasn't opened by her. The looks from the rest of the Slytherin table were a mixture of curiosity and actually kind of understanding: Howlers were never a good thing, no matter what side of blood purity you believed in.

Her fingers opened the letter long enough for it to unwrap by itself and then...the screams came.

"GINEVRA WEASLEY!" The screeching noise echoed through the entire dining hall as everyone stopped to listen. Not that they could merely not listen, when it yelled at them with the intensity of a stadium Choir.

"I am utterly ashamed you did not tell me immediately where you ended, young girl! I thought better from you! You could have been moved to Gryffindor surely, had you but asked! You are in detention young girl! No daughter of mine will ever be a Slytherin! I'll teach you back at home how to be a real Gryffindor, and then you'll get resorted! If not, I will take you out of Hogwarts and tutor you at home! You're a disgrace to the family, Ginevra! You're..."

"Silencio!" Draco's wand flung into view as the spell hit the Howler. Only, instead of removing the volume...it increased it tenfold.

"THE WORST POSSIBLE DAUGHTER EVER! I THOUGHT I HAD TAUGHT YOU WELL BUT..."

"Tace!" A Ravenclaw student screamed: his wand out and aimed at the Howler. The next instant, just as the Howler was about to yell again, it burst in flames of a deep scarlet color, exploding and turning to ashes before touching the ground.

She merely stared in shock and fear at the Howler's remains, on the table in front of her. She felt the blood leave her face and her body, as she began to tremble and shiver. She had promised herself she wouldn't cry. She knew this was meant to happen eventually, but she had hoped it wouldn't be like this. Not now, not when she was at her lowest point in life. She hurriedly began to run away, leaving behind the dining hall in utter silence.

She ran and ran through the hallways until she finally realized where she had gone: to the seventh floor, where the room of requirement was and where, at the very least for a while, she had felt accepted by others. The door was still there, and as she swung it open and entered, she realized she was staring at a miniature remake of the Gryffindor common room, albeit with a bed instead of a sofa.

Was this what she wanted? What she really needed? To be a Gryffindor? To be accepted by the likes of them?

No. She would die rather than to let herself be pulled down like her mother wished for her. Her grades were good. She'd go on a scholarship if her mother decided to pull her out of Hogwarts. She'd do everything in her power to make sure she'd get the hell out of there. Her mother hated her for being a Slytherin? Then she'd show

her that it was her and the rest of the family being Gryffindors the reason they had to live all cranked up in the Burrow.

She'd show her. She'd become someone better and when she'd be done...she'd spit on her mother face and have her grovel at her feet for the scraps.

Bellatrix Scamander

She dropped the daily prophet on the ground of the kitchen with a murderous scream. She screeched and yelled as she fell on her knees with bouts of shivers and trembles. Her nails dug deeply into her skin as sobs shackled her entire figure. She screamed again and again until all air was out of her lungs. Her son. Her loveable and adorable and wonderful son had been taken away.

Again.

No.

This was not going to happen again.

She'd get him back. She'd...She would...Of course she had to find him first. The ministry was probably on their way to the Scamander cottage to look around for prohibited books. She had to dispose of them, or hide them. She had to do the same with the dark artifacts and the likes her Lord had hidden for her...but in exchange she would have him back. That was the offer; that was her prize. She just wanted to hold him once more, to talk to him again.

She would rather die than let anyone take something of hers again. She had to be careful however. She had to act fast and be quick with it. If that man dared to come around...if that man dared to reach for her and take what was hers again...

She would kill him where he stood.

Basileus Sfor

He whistled a happy tune as he proceeded to deliver the last of his homework and projects for the following year's Newts. Really, the stuff at Durmstrang during the fourth year was a hundred percent harder than this stuff in the sixth year of Hogwarts. The curriculum

had really gone down a lot. He smiled to himself in his head as he waved to professor Flitwick and winked at Miss. Clearwater. He thumped his hand against his chest to his fellows of the study group and chuckled together with his 'friends'.

It was all so amusing, really. He was what, one hundred and ten years old? Yet nobody bothered to ask why the sorting hat had put him in Ravenclaw. Of course he had been forced to do things the normal way. To use the polyjuice potion regularly was a pain, but he had covered that up well with a sweet tooth and a charming smile...and gums.

He had to give it to the muggles, the idea of lacing a chewing gum with polyjuice and then hold it to the side of his mouth's teeth...was ingenious. James Bond and the spy flicks had also given him enough ideas to cave in a few of his teeth and fill them with said potion. Sure, his mouth tasted foul most of the time, but he hadn't survived in two World Wide Wars because he thought a potion 'tasted bad'.

He remembered the end of the war, that trickster duel...and his imprisonment in Nurmengard, his own prison!

He had laughed as the prison's bars had closed trapping him in, and he had laughed when the guards had left, leaving the prison automated to his own wards. The idiots believed that without his wand, he'd be unable to make any change or to save himself.

The stupid idiots never realized it, but magic resides in blood, not in a stick taken from a tree and bundled together with stuff coming from animals. Magic was in the blood, and blood was in the magic. Furthermore, they took from him the Elder Wand, not his own wand. The fools...

He shook his head slowly with a small smile when a third year girl gathered enough courage to confess her love for him. He politely declined of course, and then accepted to merely be friends with her. He kept on walking, but stilled as he turned the corner of the hallway he was walking upon. Luna Lovegood was waiting for him, her arms crossed and a huffing expression.

"You did it." She accused him with a whiny expression. "Why did you give him to the Nargles?"

"Beg your pardon?" He replied with an uneasy smile. Did he really have to toy with a seer even then? He hated seers. All of the types of possible seers were something he despised completely: to speak the fate of one's actions even before having started them...he hated the removal of free will. He hated being chained to prophecies.

"You know he's not infested, why did you give Harry to the Nargles?" Luna accused again.

"Nargles..." Basileus muttered slowly, "Make one strong."

"No." The first year blond haired girl shook her head, "They hurt. Hurt doesn't make one strong."

"Without obstacles, how can we grow?" He replied kindly.

"Don't show me kindness. You're a Nargle too. Nargles don't have kindness in them." Luna snapped back angrily. "He's not going to become a Nargle. You're wasting your time."

Basileus chuckled at that, dropping all pretenses and patting the girl on the head while ruffling her hair. The girl gave him a slightly bothered look, before crossing her arms across her chest.

"I saw what you wanted to do to him." She scoffed.

"Oh, no wonders you did." He replied kindly. "But when you'll look further down the road, you'll see that to kill Nargles, you need to become a Nargle yourself."

Then he left, walking easily away, the happy whistling tune starting again.

No matter what, it was good to be a Nargle...as long as you were a winning Nargle.

Harry

He stood within a luxuriously furnished room. The room held one of those giant beds that one usually saw in those noble houses of the late century, but it wasn't that which got Harry's attention. His attention didn't go to the lavishly silver and golden furniture around

him, or to the shining marble floor or to the wonderfully frescoed ceiling. No, his attention went to the three headed dog by the window, who was currently barking at him while trying to get one of his heads to stick through the space provided.

He had forgotten about Fluffy in the Forbidden Forest, but apparently the cardigan clad man hadn't and had brought him back 'home'. So if this was Prince Manor...did it mean that professor Snape was filthy rich? The silk of the bed sheets seemed of high quality, just like the brocade of the drapes. There was a richly jewel encrusted toilette in a corner, and with that Harry began to doubt he was actually in his professor's house.

Severus Snape didn't seem like the sort of man who used...grooming implements. Shaking his head from those thoughts, Harry dropped the pebble, but did keep his invisibility cloak on. Fluffy had probably smelled him coming and that was probably why he was now barking in the room.

"Shh Fluffy. It's me, Harry." He hissed to the dog which suddenly stopped barking...instead starting to pant with his tongue out. He wasn't going to play 'ball' with the Cerberus. He had no idea where he could find a ball big enough after all, and he highly doubted he...

"Stop your insensible barking you stupid mutt!" A long hiss came from outside, "I am trying to take the sun in peace and I swear I will...master?" The next moment the Cerberus face was replaced by the golden eyes of Heather, who looked into the room curiously, her tongue darting in and out. "Master?"

"I'm here." Harry hissed back, slowly letting the cloak's cowl lower itself. If the Aurors could trace him, he had no doubt Heather could dispose of them quickly.

"MASTER!" He hadn't expected a Basilisk-hug however. He really hadn't expected the basilisk to enter the room quickly, coil around him and then proceed to rub the side of her head against his own. "Master's back! You kept your promise!"

"Yes...Now let me go! I'm not breathing in here!" He hissed out, as the coils of the basilisk relaxed enough for him to breathe once more with ease.

"Sorry master. Is master all right? You're not hurt, yes?"

"I'm fine Heather. I'm fine." Harry sighed in relief, patting the head of the worry-wart basilisk.

"Good. Had to stay with the barking mutt and he is such a pain master, really! He's..."

And Harry chuckled and laughed at the banter of the Basilisk, until a sharp shrill echoed in the air and Sophie, of all things, popped inside with a display of flames.

"There you are." Harry commented, "Now...care to tell me why you had me trek through Hogsmeade?"

The reply the phoenix gave, of course...

Was a chirping, cooing sound as she neared him to deliver her dosage of pecks and cleaning of the hair.

"You're not getting off this easily, Sophie." Harry deadpanned.

"Chirp." The phoenix replied, flapping her wings and cooing softly.

"No, really." He shook his head. "Why?"

"Chirp." She replied nodding.

"Stop chirping and give me a reason." Harry muttered back trying to look at her 'strongly'.

"Chirp." The bird the size of a swan replied, taking few small 'jumps' forward, in her best imitation of a peacock probably.

"I'm not in the forgiving mood." He mumbled hesitantly.

"Chiirp!" Sophie said with a trembling 'beak' and teary eyes.

Harry groaned. "You'll tell me one day?"

"Chirp-Chirp!" Sophie nodded.

"Fine."

And with a heartfelt sigh, he proceeded to pet the phoenix head too.

Well, at least he still had some trustworthy friends.

A Cerberus, a Basilisk and a Phoenix.

Why was he having the thought that it was the beginning of a terrible joke that centered in a bar and that held an even worse punch-line?

He shook his head and removed that thought, deciding he'd take his chances to rest in the room in question. Eventually he'd ask professor Snape what his future would be, but at the moment...at the moment he could relax, because he was safe.

Author's notes

Second 'Book' done.

Harry Scamander and the King of the Animals centered around the two-fold theme of Hogwarts (Who has 'animals' to represent the houses) and the 'Animals' Harry befriended along the journey. (Basilisk, Cerberus, Phoenix) It foreshadowed certain events, and it brought answers to some questions (far less than the questions added, I'm sure about it)

The third 'Book' which will probably begin with the first chapter tonight or tomorrow (because I'm that good at updating fast) will be entitled:

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness.

Of course, you can guess where that title will lead us. Differently from the normal 'canon-line' it will start at the end of the second year's 'academic year' (Thus start of June) and proceed through the summer months until the beginning of the third year of Durmstrang, and then through said 'school' until the start of the 'Fourth' book.

Anyway, hope you enjoyed!

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 1

Harry awoke to the feeling of a warm breath against his face, mixed with the hissing sound of a snake's tongue trembling. He opened his eyes slowly and stared at the sleeping head of Heather, who had apparently coiled herself around the bed he had decided to sleep within. Her head had lowered itself near him, and eventually the Basilisk had started to snore, waking him up. He took a small breath of relief and stretched lightly, before slowly making his way out of the bed and beyond the coils of Heather who was still sleeping.

As he went to wash his face and to change his clothes, he could hear the slithering noises of the basilisk waking up and following him. One might have argued that a Basilisk in a house would cause chaos or damage, by pushing the furniture or destroying vases. In truth the Basilisk's magic was far more subtle than a mere 'change of size' type. It merely adapted the snake's body in such a way that it could always slither freely at the most adequate size. So Heather had certain part of her body small enough to pass beneath a desk and certain parts big enough to climb above a desk and slither through vases leaving them untouched.

This sort of magic was what had made it possible for the Basilisk to walk freely through the castle of Hogwarts without leaving a single trace of her passage, and because of that the same principle applied even in the Prince mansion. Albeit professor Snape had probably been busy with Hogwarts' exams and tests, and thus had yet to make his presence known to him, Harry knew without doubt that someone in the house was taking care of him. Probably it was Heather's presence that made such someone extremely shy.

Not that he could fault whoever was providing the food of keeping his distances: if he weren't immune to the basilisk's gaze, he'd do pretty much the same thing. Food appeared on the table of the dining hall at lunch hour and dinner hour. Breakfast always came from the kitchen itself, which stood at the ground floor and near a poultry spot that held chickens...but not roosters.

The kitchen was strangely different and had a far more homely feeling than the rest of the house. The other rooms reeked of luxury

and opulence, gold and silver the core keys of the entire theme. More than a house it seemed like a sort of mausoleum or a tomb for a pharaoh. Yet the kitchen had a homely feeling to it, the counter was of wood, there was a faucet and the table was a simple one with a nice checkered cover on it. All in all, Harry would have rather lived in the kitchen than in the rest of the house if only there was a bed or a cot.

Washed and dressed, Harry found himself eating scrambled eggs and bacon while sipping apple juice. He had seen from the window the orchards in the far back, but he was kind of reluctant to leave the house to begin with. He didn't know how far the wards went, and his ring didn't help him with anything that wasn't Hogwarts related.

He had found the library on his second day around the house, and on his fifth he had found the potions' laboratory in the cellars. On his tenth day, he had finally found the training halls behind a hidden trapdoor next to the statue of a wizard dueling. It had of course been Heather who had found the door, but he had to give it to the snake: she was anything but headstrong when it came to help him out. He kind of feared that, were he to ask the moon, he'd have to face an astronaut basilisk before the end of the year and try and convince her from entering the rocket in question.

It was refreshing on one side, but also absolutely wacko on the other.

Shrugging off the last bouts of sleep, he headed off towards the library that, true the nature of the owner of the mansion, held far more potion books than anything else. Funnily enough, there was more than a single way to make a potion with the same effects, and at the same time depending on how one made a potion, the chances of death were exponentially larger...and yet so too were the effects.

Apparently the risk of making a potion and seeing it fail tied together with its potency. Hard work and care was rewarded, while laziness and carelessness were paid in smokes, blood and explosions. His thoughts were all theoretical of course: he hadn't even dared take his wand out and try a spell. If the Aurors were to be believed, he had a 'trace' on the wand: he didn't want to test the wards.

Sophie had chosen to have her 'perch' in the entrance hall, sitting atop one of the cloths-stand. She thrilled every now and then for food, and somehow food found its way in a small bowl hooked on

just a lower arm of the stand. The phoenix ate vegetables and seeds, and was apparently an herbivore to begin with. The only problem was listening to her sing every single morning and waking up the rest of the house. Fluffy was the only one who instead fell asleep like a rock every time the phoenix sang.

Really, he was starting to think the Cerberus was narcoleptic. If even a single motif was made, he fell asleep like a baby...so much for being a guardian: it was a wonder the dead hadn't caught on to this and tried to run back to the living by singing a choir. Something with the same tune as 'Oh when the dead go marching in'...Harry chuckled to himself as he began to jolt down on a free piece of parchment his homework for the next year.

It was true, he didn't actually need to do it, but at the same time it was either that or turning mad from doing nothing at all. He yawned as he scratched the back of his head while thinking about the correct temperature for the Acne-removal potion to be brewed at. Heather was coiled behind him, apparently having no greater form of entertainment than watch his every move, like a faithful dog who stares and waits for a bone to be thrown or something like that.

In Heather's case, he supposed he would have to 'Leviosa' a few cows her way to elicit a similar reaction. He tapped with his left hand on the desk of the library, the silence of the room not so deafening thanks to the normal hisses of Heather that somehow brought him company. Every now and then the basilisk would actually say something, but it mostly was a compliment of the sort house elves used.

"Master is really diligent."

"Master studies so hard."

"Master is great."

At a certain point during his exercise, Harry blinked and then thumped his head against the desk. He should have seen this coming actually.

"Heather?"

"Yes master?"

"You want to go outside and play?"

"YES!"

Leave it to him to have an overactive basilisk as big as a house wishing to play in the grass.

"Wear the earmuffs." He hissed while shaking his head and heading for the door.

"But master! They're...they're horrid!" He yet had to grow accustomed to a basilisk whining, but by now he had been able to understand when the hisses held the 'whine' sub-tone and when instead they were merely for conversation. In this case, he was still pretty sure Heather would wear them, albeit she would fuss like a four year old for a good half an hour.

"And what if a rooster pops up?"

"But I was outside always master! There are no roosters!"

"Heather."

"All right master."

It was like that, as Heather already slithered out of the door with her horrendous earmuffs on, that Harry found himself for the first time take a deep breath and move a single step out of the doorstep. He blinked and looked to the right and to the left. There were no aurors out for his blood: good.

He took another step, and once more no aurors came around. Far from his line of sight, he could see a cobblestone path that led all the way down the gorgeous green hill that apparently held the mansion at his top. At the end of the path a massive gothic-looking gate seemed to hold the letter P etched in gold and silver...and Harry mentally reiterated that he hadn't expected Severus Snape to be really that rich. Actually, out of everyone...he had thought the potion professor to be a bit of a poor guy. Always dressed in black and with an unkempt and gruff face...

He was kind of wondering when the price to pay for this 'peace' would come out. Still, as he kept himself as close as possible to the house's wall and stared at Heather actually slithering through the grass quite quickly, he thought that maybe he was just exaggerating. Of course he suspected that the professor's interest in him was anything but charity: he just had to find out what the professor would want from him, and the date was indeed growing closer. Soon it would be June, and then things would take a different turn.

He groaned as the sun was obscured by the three headed Cerberus 'Fluffy' who was apparently of the idea that licking him would do him a world of good. Harry raised his hands and, as if on cue, the Cerberus got down and rolled on his backside.

"Are you really expecting me to give you a belly rub?" Harry exclaimed shocked. Just what did the dog think: that he had some sort of extensible arms? No way. He'd just rub the sides and hope he'd be appeased a bit. He just hoped this sort of thing didn't become the norm.

It was in that way, rubbing the side of a giant Cerberus dog with Heather 'gleefully' slithering in the grass, that he was found by Professor Snape on the tenth of June. The man, dressed in black even in the scorching heat of the summer, looked at him as if he was seeing a sort of mixture between a ghost, a wraith and probably a monster.

He was after all cooing a Cerberus just like he was the fluffiest puppy ever.

"I suppose Hagrid would be proud." Severus remarked distantly, "Do come in, Harry. We have things to discuss."

Those words uttered by the man, Harry sheepishly stopped rubbing the three headed dog and moved to enter, with both Heather and Fluffy following behind him. Like sheep going after the shepherd.

The inside of the house was refreshingly cool, if it was the amount of silver and gold laying around or the fact that there was the magical equivalent to an A/C somewhere in the rooms, Harry didn't yet know. The Professor was in the kitchen, which was just to the left of the entrance hall. He slowly made his way in there, just in time to see

the man known as 'the bat of the dungeon' or 'the most evil professor in the history of Hogwarts' set for himself a sandwich.

Harry would have kept his mouth open from the sheer absurdity of it, but an idea got to him beforehand: even the most seemingly evil person in the world needs to eat sometimes. That brought forth an interesting string of thoughts in his mind that went from the question if Voldemort fixed himself a sandwich every now and then too or if Dumbledore did the same. He kind of wondered if the professor would put lettuce in the sandwich. It was crunchy to eat together with a bit of mayonnaise and ham.

Oh for Merlin's beard, he had breakfast not two hours before and he was hungry again!?

"Well then, Harry." Professor Snape began, "I suppose you have already begun scurrying through my library."

Harry meekly coughed and nodded, embarrassedly looking to the floor tiles of the kitchen floor.

"And you have also found the potion laboratory and the dueling grounds, am I correct?"

Harry whispered a meek affirmative answer, and Severus merely nodded to himself.

"Then the wards are working perfectly, and you may use spells within the house or its grounds without risk. I will remove the trace from your wand as soon as I have rested from the voyage." Severus mulled. "And I suppose you should come to know that unfortunately, Hagrid and the Granger girl were not graced by the ministry. Deemed to be accomplices in your crimes..."

"Wh...What?" Harry's eyes bulged in shock, all thoughts of sandwiches and food forgotten. "Why? They did nothing!"

Severus raised an eyebrow. "Oh? Then tell me who earns something by leaving innocents behind the bars?"

Harry's face frowned for a moment, before he began to mull it over. In his relief for having been saved he hadn't thought about those he had left behind.

"Dumbledore? But...why? I mean, isn't that bad press?"

"He caught the criminals, did he not? And he made the third one, a 'second coming of the Dark Lord' escape from Hogwarts before he could truly poison the minds of the young students." Severus replied taking a bite of his sandwich, "Tell me: how is this bad press?"

Harry cringed, before pointing out his own version.

"But they were used! Didn't the Imperius defense get out many Death Eaters? Why would it be different with them?" At the perfectly asked question, Severus gave a mere curt nod and a bitter smile.

"The thing with original defenses, Harry, is that they rarely work twice. Since many families were distressed by the lack of further action against the 'poor' Imperiused wizards and witches, it was decided to place sterner laws in any case. So, even if they were 'used' by someone else, they are still at fault...for not having resisted better."

"That's stupid." Harry mumbled.

Severus merely raised an eyebrow before chuckling.

"Indeed it is. However the one who made said laws was none other than Albus Dumbledore soon after the last of the Death Eater was freed and nobody found the time to go around and change them again...thus they remained." Severus shrugged, "Furthermore I am not convinced of the innocence of Hermione Granger...sure, she was possessed by the Dark Lord, but every possession Harry requires one key thing: approval or lack of effort to fight back. I suspect that she voluntarily bowed to the power of the Dark Lord and was burned in answer."

"Still..." Harry sighed, "It's sad."

The raven haired professor nodded with an awkward expression on his face. "Life isn't generally pleasant, Harry. Now, however, we should decide upon your future." The man said, before popping out from his sleeves some application forms.

"This here," Severus said easily, "Is an application for Beauxbatons. A school in Southern France that has a knack for pleasantries and etiquette," the man shivered, "and the headmistress is Madame Maxime, she's not a supporter of Dumbledore, that much I can assure you. Their years are only six, and they sit their exams at the end of their last year, but they do start earlier and have a far heavier workload...they do have to place the course on 'how to correctly fold a napkin' after all." The man snorted. Apparently choosing Beauxbatons would be like choosing to go for the easy route that professor Snape hated to its core...or something like that.

Then the man tapped to the next form.

"This here is an application for the Universitatis in Artium Arcanorum, located at Rome, in Italy." Severus commented, "Their school lasts for eleven years, starting at ten and ending at twenty-one, but there's the catch." The man commented, "All courses are chosen by the students, the lecturers merely speak and you have the choice to sit your exams or not. Of course children think it can be all fun and games...until the reality that you're forced to grow up is settled on your back when you find yourself without a job prospect for having chosen wrongly...and having Newts in 'Quidditch' and 'Divination' does not open doors." The professor drawled, "Their headmistress is Isabella Rossi, an old 'War Glory', she fought in both Wars, magical...and non...your application would pass through her eyes, and unfortunately she is rather picky on who can join midway." Probable, but clearly out of the question...albeit it did seem interesting...maybe he could ask about what type of courses there were?

"Then we have the Universität der Magie of Munchen, in Germany. Nice school, nice curriculum, but nothing more interesting than a lady-bug eating a broccoli...in my opinion, it would be the worst way to waste eight years of your life. They have a ban on anything even remotely dark or demonic of origins: following the Fuhrer's attempts at occult and the destruction of Berlin because of a rampaging Inferi horde they prohibited everything 'Dark' just to be on the safe side. They probably would hand you over to Dumbledore the split second they find out who you are." Definitely not then: he didn't know German to begin with.

"Finally, ignoring the Greek academy to begin with since they're on hot coals with their purists folks," Severus remarked casually, "We have Durmstrang."

"That's the school Grindelwald went to." Harry deadpanned, "Won't they...you know, look for the second Dark Lord there?"

"No." Severus retorted. "They are busy looking for you through Great Britain, and since I have come back home, they expect me to open my floo network tomorrow and from there on out, it will no longer be safe for you to stay here...which is why..." He tapped at the various forms, "You have to choose and then be relocated to a safe house."

"This seems so much like going into an eyewitness program." Harry murmured in disbelief, and at the risen eyebrow from Professor Snape, he replied. "When eyewitnesses see crimes committed by powerful men, the government offers them safety and brings them under the program: basically changes their name and gives them new identities until they can testify."

The professor's right hand went to his own chin as he was apparently lost in thought. In the end the man nodded, and replied.

"Indeed. However, out of all these schools..." Severus began, "Only Durmstrang has enough grounds for a Basilisk, a Cerberus and a Phoenix...and you can't expect me to keep them here forever. Do you know how much the dog eats?"

"I'm sorry." Harry muttered, "It's just that...is it safe to move them? I think I can put Heather to sleep, and if she's hibernating she won't be eating at all: you can place her in the cellar afterwards."

"Uhm...and for the Cerberus?"

"He could come with me. Yet the phoenix...Sophie's too easy to see: how many 'second coming of the dark lord' have a phoenix to begin with?"

Severus curtly nodded.

"I'll ask my employer for a safe place for your pets...it is better if you reach Durmstrang with a light baggage after all."

"But what about the Italian school? I mean, it does seem pretty nifty..." Harry replied quietly.

"Then file in their application too. You're in luck they're all in English. Just remember: you will need a fake name depending on the application module. For the surname, use 'Prince'. They'll know you've got my endorsement in that way."

"You said nothing more on Durmstrang." Harry whispered, "What are their courses? How long does it last? What are the dates? Is there a fee or something like that..."

"Well, it has seven years just like Hogwarts," Severus began carefully, "And while they don't have a course on 'Defense against the Dark Arts' they have a course on 'Offensive and Defensive magic' which is pretty much Dark Arts and their counters all together. It's located...well, somewhere. Let me tell you this: there's a powerful charm on the school, placed there by some warlocks of old. Nobody can state or even hint at where the school is. Many have decided it's in Russia, but the same could be said for Norway or Sweden or any other country fitting the criteria...Nobody knows. Sure, they can describe the surroundings and so on, but they can't place the name of a mountain near it or similar...thus you would be safe beneath their wards with no problem."

"Which seems awfully good to me..." Harry mumbled, "Why not simply send me to Durmstrang to begin with? Why ask me what I want to do?"

Severus looked kind of in a pinch, as he finally muttered back.

"My...employer said you should be granted the freedom of choice. Although if you did go to Durmstrang, things would be far easier to solve: the headmaster there is an Ex-Death Eater, and he knows I hold skeletons that belong to his closet within mine...he wouldn't deliver you to Dumbledore at all even if you were to parade your real name and surname to him."

Harry bit his lower lip, nodding lightly. He was given a choice, wasn't he? Who was he to decide after all? At the moment he was still alive thanks to the kindness of his professor and his patience. He could just as easily be delivered to Dumbledore's footstep within moments,

and yet he was still there, and given a choice. He knew that a life running away would solve no problems, and that he needed to make a choice.

He gently tapped on the form for Durmstrang.

"I'll...I'll go to Durmstrang."

Severus nodded and turned to leave the kitchen. "Compile your form and then send your snake to sleep in the training grounds...and wait for me in the entrance hall tomorrow morning. I'll be asleep hopefully until dinner time."

Harry awkwardly smiled and grabbed the form from the table, before heading off to his room to take out a quill and work over the sheet of paper.

The name was important, he mused over as he sat at his desk, quill in hand and already having a vague idea: he'd go for a variant of Harry so he would remember it far more quickly than usual...Durmstrang seemed kind of Germanic.

"Heinrich." He mused out, "My name will be Heinrich...Prince."

Severus Snape

It was too easy to guilt-trip people.

He did feel slightly uneasy at having done the same to Lily's son, but it had been necessary to ensure the boy's loyalty and, at the very least, to be considered as a mere benevolent entity. Even if the ploy were to be discovered, his 'employer' would be the one at fault. He had been playing this type of game for so long he knew all the rules by heart...and nothing less would have sufficed after all.

He reconnected the Floo Network with expert moves and flicks of wand, before pinching a bit of powder within and yelling out loud.

"Igor Karkaroff residence!"

His head within the fire, he saw the startled expression of his ex-colleague on the other side moving near the fire.

"Severus? W...What is it?"

"Igor. The potion you asked for will be ready by tomorrow...I hope everything is fine on your side?"

"Of course Severus!" The man replied with a bright smile. "Everything is fine, my friend!"

"I hope so." The raven haired man replied, "You do not want to make your employer angry of course."

"I live but to serve him, Severus." Karkaroff replied quickly, "I will make sure the potion is kept safe."

"Good." Then Severus' head disappeared from the fire, and with another flick of the wand the floo network was disconnected again. Sighing deeply, the man went off to bed. He knew tomorrow would be a hard day, but the sooner he got it done, the sooner everything would be fine.

Heather

"Master?" Heather asked carefully, having followed her kind master all the way down into the training grounds. The stuff inside had all been moved in a corner, and she could easily stretch her body inside with little troubles.

"Heather, I..." Her master spoke with hesitation, so there was something he was trying to hide from her.

"Master?"

"You'll need to sleep and wait for me here, Heather." Harry hissed to the basilisk, "It's for the best."

"Wh...Why? No! Master you can't! I'm...I don't want to..." As she grew agitated, her master made a sad grimace, before starting to sing in parseltongue the first few lines of the lullaby that her old master had known and used centuries before. She fought to remain awake as she tried to move and slither closer to her master, to plead him to reconsider.

"Master...please...no...I don't want to...please..." Yet the song crept within her ears and settled inside of her, the lullaby too strong for her to oppose as she finally began to close her eyes. The last thing she heard before slumping into a sleep without dreams were her master's last words.

"Sleep well, Heather."

Heinrich

He should have realized one truth of the world. One unique and unquestionable truth: nothing is as good in the inside as you can see it from the outside. The result was mixed. On one side it seemed that the idea of him being 'somewhere Dumbledore couldn't reach' was a good one. On the other, the fact that he was not at Durmstrang meant that somehow, one had played with him one time too many.

He knew little of what Durmstrang was, but this certainly couldn't be it. The man he had met, Igor Karkaroff, had given him a stick, the code to activate the stick and told him they'd see each other when school began at the end of summer. So he had of course activated the portkey in hope for a normal looking, or even a shabby looking, place where rest his head after a day of learning.

He hadn't expected to be met with the giant words etched in Germanic that he knew by heart.

And he knew those words by heart because he had studied it in his first year, as curious as he had been of the second world wide war.

Für das höhere Wohl.

For the Greater Good.

This was Nurmengard. This wasn't a room in an apartment complex near the school and it wasn't a place he had ever thought he would visit.

This was frigging Nurmengard, the prison that held Gellert Grindelwald imprisoned and that had been built by the same man! This was the last place he would ever want to set place in, and as his mind reeled in the thought that he might have been betrayed,

that Severus had used him for some sort of political gamble or reason...he saw just who was at the massive gates of the prison and he merely decided to stop thinking.

Basileus Sfor was waving at him to come closer, clad in a dark black trench-coat with a dark sweater beneath and a pair of dark trousers to complement the 'dark' look. His red hair was something quite contrary to the general theme of 'being dark' but as Harry took the first steps in his direction, he realized something was wrong.

The entire prison was eerily silent, and the more he moved closer the more the feeling of dread intensified. Why was he there to begin with? Why wasn't he in a shabby apartment somewhere near Durmstrang? He kept on asking himself those very same questions, until he stood straight in front of the Ravenclaw prefect.

"Well, Igor did manage to get you here I suppose." The red haired Basileus commented, a small smile on his lips. "Good. Let us make haste then, we have a lot of things to do and summer is awfully short as it is." As the prefect turned to enter the castle, Harry stilled on his spot.

"What the bloody hell are we doing here!?" He practically yelled on the spot. This was not fine! This was wrong! He wasn't going to stand for this! He had a right to a normal, happy life! He was not the plaything of others and he...

"Come on in and I'll tell you," Basileus commented, "Unless you wish to run away from the prison, in which case the English Aurors would be on you in a few seconds the moment you outside the wards. You really don't have much of a choice, you know?" And Harry knew that Basileus, the one he had met for all his years at Hogwarts had been a lie. This...this teen was not Basileus. This man...he had been right in being wary of him: he was not normal. He was not a normal Ravenclaw.

Yet he had no choice.

He had to follow him within the massive gates of Nurmengard, he had to walk beneath the sign 'For the Greater Good' and hope that he did not make the same end as those at Auschwitz who entered beneath a different sign, that still held the same amount of

distasteful sarcasm, as if to make a last sick joke to the dead men walking.

The Greater Good would not set him free, just like Work did not free those who entered the German Lager, and just as Death was all that awaited them, so too it was probably all that awaited him. He could not turn back. He...

He really wondered why he was fighting destiny.

He was wondering why he just didn't stop to fight and simply gave in. Why did he have to be a coward? Why not just jump head-on in the trouble that brewed and carved his place? Why not?

This was not him...this was not Harry.

Of course...maybe it was time he stopped being Harry altogether. Had he ever been Harry Dursley since the beginning of his journey in the world of magic? When had he stopped being himself, and had begun someone else? When had he decided he would learn magic to kill people? Why had he thought it 'cool' and not 'horrible'? Why was he stepping forward and not running away anyway? Why had he not pleaded innocent and why had he run?

Those decisions, all those decisions he had taken and done and that would haunt him forever...why had he chosen in that way?

And the answer he knew it of course, he knew it because deep down it had been the very same that had brought him to spurn his real parents and to seek a different self.

He had wanted to learn everything, and he had been helped in doing so. He had become powerful, and in becoming powerful...he had been twisted by power itself. Power had made him drunk and he had reviled in it with his speeches and actions...he had believed his own words and had dreamed of conquest and glory and revolution.

Then he had finally reached peace. He had been left alone for a few months of rest and solace in the Prince's mansion...and when normality had finally reached him, it had soon ended up with a quick set of ever-changing events in the same day.

He had gone from hopeful to start a new future to utterly scared out of his wits as he entered the prison reputed to be able to hold Grindelwald prisoner...and with the Ravenclaw Prefect walking as if he knew the prison himself.

"Ah...you decided to follow then," Basileus commented idly, as the massive doors of Nurmengard closed behind him.

It was in that moment, in that precise moment, that Harry felt the desperate need to scream and whip his wand out, preparing to unleash his entire complement of spells against the boy in front of him.

"WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON!? GET ME OUT OF HERE THIS INSTANT OR I SWEAR I WILL..." He hyperventilated as his breath grew ragged and missing, he swayed a bit to the right and to the left, trying to keep his wand on the boy who appeared merely amused.

"Nurmengard is located atop the Wetterstein mountain range, due to the altitude, the air is pretty much rarified. You would do better to calm down before you collapse. I also advise you to keep your cool for what is about to happen in..." Basileus gave a look at the watch at his wrist, "In three...two...one..."

Harry did not give time to the man to reach the end of his countdown, instead unleashing immediately the first offensive spell that came to his mind.

"TRUDO!" A veritable storm of ethereal lances jolted forward in an attempt to skewer Basileus-who-clearly-wasn't a normal Ravenclaw student. Yet the lances were wiped out, as if made of nothing more than paper, by the mere flick of Basileus' hand.

"Foolish child." The boy's hair began to shorten and turn white as he spoke. "You think I battled Albus," his body began to stretch as the clothes appeared to be adapting to his change in size, "for three hours," his face began to age, "while poisoned," his hands wrinkled, "only with words?" Harry's own breath was now far over the norm, he was going to fall down dead any second, he knew it. Trudo had never failed him. Sure, the wand maybe but the spell? To counter it so easily? It was a war spell, only those who...no...he...

The wrinkled face of a short white haired old man came into view, the clothes now tightly holding his frame together as if he risked falling down in shambles should they release him. He appeared to possess bright blue eyes that looked ready to pierce through his very soul and yet, yet with all of that Harry knew only one thing.

He was in the nest of the Magical Nazi party, speaking to the Magical Nazi Fuhrer of the first Reich...He was speaking with the man that had birthed the philosophy of the 'Greater Good'.

He was speaking...

With Gellert Grindelwald.

The next moment, predictably, he fell unconscious on the ground.

Author's notes

And we begin.

For those who thought I would enlighten your moods with !Sweetly-Happy-Harry and !Enjoying-life Harry, don't worry, I'll break his mind fairly soon...again. (One shouldn't actually be saying these things to readers...it makes them think the author is cruel to begin with).

Anyway! This first chapter wrote itself like a charm, because it actually was pretty easy to write.

Harry escaped in March, leaving May and a bit of June of 'happiness' with the sort of 'bucolic' display of a happy Harry playing with his animals in the garden. Then of course he is abruptly brought back to a reality that claims him as some sort of unlucky sod who is apparently sought after by half the world...and the last word goes to Grindelwald for this book in question.

Hence Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness.

In this book, you may expect various things, mostly however it's 'Different places from canon' and 'more characters that are not mentioned in canon'. IF possible, I'll go with using names belonging to 'passing by' canon individuals, but whereas that will be not possible...well, I'll just go on a site with 'baby names' and work from there with nationalities and similar.

You can start to suspect that this particular book will display something else. Particularly, you must consider the duality being 'what is evil?' and 'what is good?' compared with 'what is easy' to 'what is right'.

And may Merlin helps us all.

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 2

Harry came to his senses in a small room with no windows to speak of, but with a dirty round glass panel that gave on the outside and a dingy looking door of wood. He frowned, puzzled as to where he was, when his hands touched upon his glasses on the bed desk near him and he slipped them on. He hadn't been wrong: the room was Spartan to say the least, with a dingy rug and a small battered table with an old looking chair. There was no grandiosity like the Prince mansion and there was no excess around. A wooden dresser in the corner completed the furniture neatly, but clearly not nicely.

It felt like a prison, because it probably was. Harry groaned as the memory of what had happened collided with his brain and thought patterns, hitting him as hard as a wall could. He was meant to go to Durmstrang, and as a safe-house for the summer months...they had dropped him off at Nurmengard, with Gellert Grindelwald being...Basileus? The Ravenclaw prefect was in truth the man that had fought for three hours against Albus Dumbledore, the first Magical Fuhrer of the wizard world? He couldn't help but feel cheated.

He hadn't expected to spend a normal teenage summer of course: he had thought something along the lines of studying spells and books and practice for duels. He did need to learn how to defend himself from highly trained forces, considering the Aurors were apparently after him to begin with. He had little choice in the matter...he just hoped Gellert wouldn't be torturing him any time soon.

Carefully, he stood up from the bed and walked hesitantly towards the dresser, seeing how he was without his robes and all. What he saw within made him raise an eyebrow. There was a stitched D that probably stood for Durmstrang on a thick leather jacket with multiple buttons, and a thick dark shirt and muffler plus a black sweater and a pair of dark leather trousers. The shoes too seemed kind of like those of the fifties, but all in all it was a sleek suit to walk in. He had to admit as much once dressed in it after all.

His eyes finally settled on the door, and muttering words of courage to himself, his right hand jolted forward to open it and walk out. The

hallway he ended up in was made of smooth stone, just like the rest of the walls of the prison, and held similar doors both to the right and to the left. Prison cells no doubt. He carefully sniffed the air, finding himself perplexed by the smell of frying bacon coming from his right side. With nothing better to do, Harry began to walk in that direction.

It was surprising how much time can stretch when nervousness wrecks you within. It couldn't have taken Harry more than three to four minutes to reach the end of the corridor and the subsequent descent by a flight of stairs couldn't have taken more than two more minutes, yet to him it felt like hours. His every slow step was accompanied with the noise of it that echoed throughout the area, probably as a way for guards to hear when a prisoner was escaping. Yet there were no guards in Nurmengard that he could see walking around, but after all it was possible there probably were pretty vicious and powerful wards protecting the place.

The floor he ended up in was similar to the one he had left, with the only difference that the smell was stronger and seemed to come from the end of the hallway on the other side this time around. Taking deep calm breaths, Harry walked through the corridor passing by the cells that once, a long time ago, had kept prisoner the political enemies of Grindelwald. Finally, he reached his destination. The end of the hallway opened up in a large square room, one that once had been the kitchen of the prison probably.

Gellert was there, near the kitchen's counter, frying bacon and scrambling eggs. He looked just like any normal grandfather, albeit he was dressed in an eerily similar way to him. Maybe retired SS from Germany were the same. A nice, clean face and a strange awry smile met with Harry's eyes as the man spoke clearly.

"Well, you're awake aren't you?"

"Y...Yes sir." He replied carefully. He didn't know what to expect, but if this man was responsible for having given birth to the magical Nazi party, then it was better to play it safe.

"Polite? No need," Gellert replied rolling his eyes, "I might seem senile, but I certainly ain't." He added carefully, "You are no more prisoner of mine than you would have been in a normal safe-house, and you will go to Durmstrang at the end of the summer." The man commented with a bitter smile, "Hungry?"

"W...Why was I...taken?" He asked, carefully taking a few steps forward. The food was inviting actually, and albeit he was speaking to a Nazi Fuhrer, he was an 'Arian' to begin with, wasn't he? Blood and all he was fine, so he supposed he could play it off as...

"No need to delve in subtlety, Harry." Gellert commented as he sat down in front of him, "Eat and we'll talk later on." Did the man read his mind? How could he have managed that when he was still wearing his invisible cloak? Did he take away his stuff? But...how could he have managed that when not even Dumbledore had?

He hesitantly began to take bites, finding himself forced to admit that scrambled eggs and bacon were easy to make by a magical Fuhrer, and that he had just seen the man do as much. He kind of wondered if Hitler ever cooked his own meals every now and then, or if some 'great man' of the past did the same. Everyone was a kid once, so he supposed that once, sitting on a stool eating scrambled eggs, there had been a Mussolini, a Hitler, a Stalin, a Dumbledore, a Gellert, a Voldemort even and maybe even more and more.

It was sort of peculiar how fast his train of thoughts was derailing from the nervousness in being in the same room with the wizard who was as powerful as Dumbledore...and held a clearly dark side in the war.

"I do wonder what passes through your mind," Gellert remarked, "I suppose you ended up in Ravenclaw for a reason after all...can't stop you from thinking, isn't that right?"

Harry looked down at his empty plate in silence, embarrassedly not knowing what to say back.

"Well then, not a problem. I'll do the talking." Then, the old wizard began to speak in a kind and gentle tone. "I was once a young and foolish boy, who thought that magic was a wonderful thing to learn." He spoke slowly, his eyes glazing over as memories probably washed over him. "I believed not in 'Dark' or in 'Light' but merely in learning all that I could...just like you," Harry shivered at those words, because he knew where the man was going to land, oh if he knew. Was this how Hitler recruited his men the first times, in the German's pubs?

"But I was young, and foolish." Gellert continued bitterly, "I knew not of consequences, only of how nice spells were and of how powerful magic could be...and so I learned and learned and in the end I knew all that I needed...but I desired more." He spoke suavely, "And I began to create." Harry could feel the temperature in the room drop as the man spoke again, "I weaved magic into spells and forms, I looked for words and incantations, and in the end I had to practice it. At first it was but animals, nobody cares if a pig is found skinned after all, or if his entrails are on fire..."

Harry felt bile rise from his stomach to the tip of his tongue. He was vaguely reminiscing Icarus and having moved too close to the sun and getting burned as a result.

"Yet, in the end I was blinded by my discoveries. If a pig could bleed out in mere seconds, and his blood used as a rope to choke the nearby swine, then what if it was used on a man?" Harry began to shiver. What was the name of that mad Nazi doctor in the lagers? Doctor Josef Mengele was his name, if he recalled correctly. "And what if it was added with a bit of transfiguration magic to turn blood into acid?" Yes, this was outright sick.

"Would human's body transfigured permanently to resemble monsters breed similar monsters, or would they give 'pure' individuals?" Harry was feeling ready to retch: the man appeared to be kind, but his words, his actions...his...his past...He felt disgusted.

Gellert sighed. "I was foolish. I got caught, expelled, and yet I was the one who chose to leave. I carved the symbol of the Death Hallows upon a wall of Durmstrang and left, seeking people who would share my belief that death could be conquered. I experimented on muggles mainly, but sometimes I tried my hand on muggleborns to see if magic changed something of my experiments."

He had eaten breakfast with a sick, sick man. Sick in the head and in the soul, a clearly deranged individual who was speaking of his past fondly...he was dead. He'd rather go back to his 'mother' house and be crucio-ed to death.

"Still, people flocked to me in search of my power, and while I gave them scraps they smiled and swore that, for the Greater Good, they would follow my commands. My enemies were soon destroyed,

power made me the ruler of the continent and...and as I lay waste to the few pockets of resistance, Dumbledore betrayed me." The old man spoke gravely, his tone slowly changing to a bitter resentment, "He had been the genius, you know? I was never much of a prodigy, only a hard worker and a curious person. Dumbledore...he was smart, intelligent, a genius." The old man admitted.

"He knew things and he learned them quickly and...and he shared my belief that muggles were inferior, nothing more than stock to be used for experiments or to be treated as second hand citizen of the world." Gellert's voice was pained as he spoke now, "And the horrors...the horrors we both brought to the world were unspeakable. I have been in the abyss, Harry. I have done far more than just gaze into it: I have walked and feasted upon its rotten remains and learned more than any other man could ever have...and Albus was at my side. Curses to destroy through atrocious accidents long wealthy families, hexes that could tear apart limbs and impossible to defend against...incantations that could cause earthquakes and spells that could unleash tidal waves...for the right sacrifice."

Gellert shook his head, and then proceeded once more.

"I was about to conquer Britain, when Albus got the better of me. He had made sure never to be involved after all, so that he could hope to conquer Britain from the inside...it had been our plan, in all of its majestic grandness and simplicity. You catch more flies with honey than vinegar after all and yet...yet he betrayed me. The Elder Wand, one of the Deathly Hallows that had been in my possession for decades, was taken from me through treachery after the duel. Albus holds it now and yet...yet I was saved from its curse...and I realized my errors in my imprisonment."

Harry's eyebrows both raised in surprise as his mouth was probably hanging open from the disbelief. He was facing a 'redeeming' Nazi? No. This had to be a trick. He narrowed his eyes as he kept on listening to the story. If worse came to worse he'd use his wand and...

He blanched. He was missing his wand! How did he let such an important thing get away with him now!? He needed his wand to.

"Worry not, Harry." Grindelwald muttered rolling his eyes, "My story is nearly at its end, and by the time I'll be done you'll have your wand back."

"H-How?" Harry croaked, "I tied it..."

"To an interesting artifact, I'm sure." Gellert commented with a knowing nod, "Yet the chain was a mere duellist one and I do know more than a few spells to cut said things easily. Never underestimate the power of good charms." The old wizard grinned lightly. "In any event...where was I? Oh yes, my imprisonment."

The man stood up, carefully walking towards the kitchen's windows, which were quite a bit more spacious differently from the ones in the cells. The sky was a clear blue so high up in the mountains as they were, and surrounding them was nothing but dull grey rocks and stone. Not even a hint of snow to colour the landscape in white.

"I was brought here, no doubt believing that it would add insult to injury. I built this prison, stone by stone I carved it out of the mountain and added layers upon layers of protections within it, and yet when I was done I realized that no prison should ever be able to hold its creator inside...Salazar was of the same line of thought after all," Gellert winked, "You made an excellent escape from Hogwarts, I must say. Everything timed to perfection to avoid the Aurors."

"What...What do you mean? I just...I just went where I knew there was an exit..." Harry mumbled back perplexed, maybe he could get the reason why Sophie had decided not to teleport him out of Hogwarts with ease.

"Well, you see..." Gellert began, "When someone passes through wards, it leaves a trace. Even if you do bypass the apparition ones, a trace is still left and if a similar trace is found on the wards, let's say...of Hogsmeade in a specific point...then they know the point of exit and that of entrance."

Harry nodded, "So because I walked through it all I was safe."

"And the detection spells too." Gellert added, "The Aurors of course aren't push-overs Harry. They know their jobs to perfection. They scanned the forest and then the village. To avoid all those patrols and not use magic...you're a fledgling thief in the making I'd hazard."

"Just luck, sir." Harry muttered, flustered from the 'praise' if he should take it as such. He had had hopes of becoming some sort of wizened researcher of spellcraft and magical history, not a 'thief' as his highest aspiration point.

"Luck? Do you know that luck is nothing more than magic bringing balance to the world?" Gellert replied thoughtfully. "Otherwise, why do you think there are potions to brew liquid luck, or to create bad luck? It's all in the magic, Harry. And magic is all in the..."

"Blood." Harry finished, "Blood is in the magic, and magic is in the blood." He repeated slowly.

Gellert cracked a grin, before nodding slowly. "Truer words were never spoken." The man tapped on the window carefully, opening it and letting the cold air of the mountain filter in to wipe out the smell of deep fried bacon and eggs.

"But let us continue my tale," Gellert added. "I found myself imprisoned, and as I waited for the guards to grow complacent and leave, I found myself with enough time to think...and you know what I found out, Harry?" He asked carefully, "That being the top of the world's most powerful wizards means nothing, when you have no-one near you to share your accomplishments with. My men left me the moment I lost, my 'friends' didn't exist to begin with and all that was left, laying in a cold and dingy stone cell, was nothing but a bitter, lonely and betrayed old man." He chuckled grimly. "It gave me time to reflect. In youth, I had sought out the powers of the Deathly Hallows to make myself a master of Death. In old age, all that I sought out was just to not die alone and forgotten...and the crimes I did weight on my soul far more than anything else I can think of."

Slowly, shaking his head, Gellert snapped his fingers and the windows closed themselves again.

"Your phoenix did hate me with a reason, Harry. I am not a 'good' guy, but neither do I believe to be as 'evil' as I was portrayed. Think about it: weren't the greatest breakthrough in the history of medicine done within the lagers of the Nazi, using the living flesh of the Jews captured within it? Do the sacrifices of few thousands make it worthwhile, if it betters the entire world?" Gellert gaze softened, as

he chuckled bitterly. "Let me answer that question for you, Harry: it does not." Gellert took a deep breath, before continuing.

"Nothing I will ever do will bring back those I experimented upon, nothing I will ever do will be enough to grant me a chance at redeeming myself, and yet...yet I will try and make sure that you, Harry, will not suffer my same fate. Only I who know the allure of true power can stem you away from it. I saw you," Harry flinched as Gellert took a step forward, his tone turning accusing, "I saw you act like a power-drunk tyrant against those who defied your claims of righteousness. I saw your hand itch for your wand and I saw you speak a speech that would have enticed even if the most reticent of followers...and in seeing you, I saw myself."

Harry paled, as the realization sunk in that the man in front of him was...trying to help him? Why would he? For his own redemption? Maybe...maybe he could take him up on his offer?

"I have lived for one hundred and eleven years," Gellert commented offhandedly, "Three sets of one. Powerful magical number this age is. I assure you." The man chuckled, "that it felt like destiny had foretold your arrival to me, and yet I knew all too well that destiny means nothing, in the eyes of a prophecy."

Here the man's face turned into a scowl as he pressed on.

"And what a daunt prospect this prophecy is, Harry...or should I call you Heinrich? This prophecy...well, I suppose there is no safer place and no sooner moment to say it than now, is there?" Harry meekly bit his lower lip, was this the reason everyone seemed interested in him? Was this the reason people believed it was fun to toy with his life?

"He who holds the three fortresses of darkness shall bring forth its spawns.

The sons of a bloody past will obey the chosen of their lord.

The betrayed will come to him who holds their kin as their own.

The drinkers of life shall rise to the call of the master of Snakes.

Together, they shall open the path to the sunken city."

The words left Gellert mouth with a tone of dreadful importance, and as Harry listened to this 'prophecy' he couldn't help but wonder where precisely was it said that he had to be the one inserted into it. There wasn't his name there, and except for the bit about 'the master of Snakes' it wasn't as if he had any other redeeming quality, was it?

"Prophecies are fickle things. The more you fight them, the more you get hurt in the end." Gellert commented offhandedly, "For example, the second line: 'the sons of a bloody past will obey the chosen of their lord' could both refer to Durmstrang, where I studied and allied myself with the fathers and grandfathers of the current generation, or...Nurmengard, where beneath its thick stone foundation lays the remaining army that I used in the conquest of the world decades ago...Inferi. An army of Inferi birthed by the blood soaked past and left beneath these very walls in wait...and now, you understand why you are so important?"

Harry didn't. What was the point in telling him this? It wasn't as if he was the one chosen by the...oh no, no. He couldn't be serious about this.

"Harry Scamander," Gellert began carefully, "Under the oath of my magic, my will and my soul, I hereby thusly proclaim, free of compulsions and without being forced: I name you my sole heir, and may all that is mine one day be yours...Heinrich Grindelwald, my son...so mote it be."

"No!" Harry screamed, "I refuse! You can't force me to accept this! I'm not going to..."

"You cannot refuse that which is freely given," Gellert replied with a small grin, "Only magic may take back what magic has given, and without conditions to my gifts, you cannot refuse them." He shook his head slowly, "Maybe this will add a stain on my soul, but it's already so blood-soaked that it doesn't matter any longer." The old wizard chuckled. "Now, would you like to visit our fortress, my son?"

"I am not your son." Harry replied bitterly. "My father's name is Vernon...I'm Harry Dursley...not...not that."

"You were not told, I suppose." Gellert muttered, "I thought revenge wouldn't be needed to spurn you, but if you so much insist on being difficult..."

"I am not being difficult!" Harry spat out, "I don't want to be a part of any bloody prophecy of sorts!" Then he blinked, "What do you mean I was not told? What is it? Did something," he paled, "happen to my parents?"

"So you were not told." Grindelwald mused, "Very well." He nodded to himself, "Your parents died in an accident, in America, during the course of the last year. Care to guess who planned the 'accident' to happen?"

Harry felt his legs crumple beneath him as he fell on the floor, tears streaking down his face. His...mother, and his...father...dead? Both of them? How? Why? What did they do? They hadn't...He hadn't even said...one year already? He had thought...he had hoped he could still be a part of the family eventually...He had prayed they'd accept him...He...He began to cry and wail.

"Now this is unbecoming," Gellert grumbled, "Tears and cries will lead you nowhere."

"F...Fuck off." Harry mumbled, his eyes red and puffy as they stung, "I'm...I'm going to kill Dumbledore."

"You...and what army?" The old wizard replied, a small smile creeping on his face that made Harry wish he had his wand back, if only to kill the bloody bastard. The man was right of course: he knew that crying...that it wouldn't bring them back, but...

"You knew all along I would accept." Harry accused, no...Heinrich. "You spoke of redemption and yet you're here, expecting me to fight Dumbledore for revenge. Why should I believe you? Maybe you're the one who did it to begin with!" As he exclaimed that, Gellert chuckled and shook his head.

"Why would I want that, Heinrich? Don't you understand why I took an interest in you? It is so that, should death claim me beforehand, you may complete what I have started. You will be the heir to my wealth, it is true...but you will also be the heir to my hope. Your actions, although bloody and made for revenge, will be my

redemption for all the evil I have caused. Killing Dumbledore is not an evil act, Heinrich." Gellert spoke slowly, "It is merely the closing of a cycle...for he who wields the Elder Wand will always suffer a painful death eventually. That is the curse of the wand, albeit proclaimed myth of course."

"What do we do now?" Heinrich asked carefully, eying with a bit of distrust Gellert. He didn't trust the old wizard one bit, no matter what he said or what he wanted to do. He had used underhanded methods, and had basically ignored him. He could have delivered to him the news back at Hogwarts! He could have told him sooner, or done something to save his parents. He was sure he could have done that, yet he hadn't and Harry knew that deep down, the man was helping him just to help himself. Who was he, however, to look at a horse's gift in the mouth?

He was thankful Fluffy would be in the Durmstrang grounds instead of here with him...he didn't want to give the man any 'hostage' to hold on to. He didn't trust him not to try something before the end of the summer and he'd be damned if he ever took anything at face value any longer.

"Well, we could visit the fortress of Nurmengard or," Gellert inflexed the tone, "We could get down to business. Your choice, Heinrich...we have all summer to bring you up to speed with the Durmstrang curriculum, and then we will head over, during Christmas vacation of course, towards the Island of Montecristo."

"Why?" Heinrich asked puzzled. He had no idea what was important in the island to begin with, but judging by the name it could pretty much be Spanish or Italian. Why did they have to go over there? Was it perhaps one of the 'Dark Fortresses' Gellert was so convinced he could pass through?

"Because while I have doubts on the true fortress of the 'betrayed' I know for certain that the life stealers are trapped within that island, for it is a prison for Vampires created by the International Confederacy of Wizards after all. Just like Azkaban is a prison for Wizards whose sins are grave and Nurmengard was meant a prison for those who had different thoughts from mine...and just like Durmstrang is a veritable fortress, overlooking quite a bit of land." Gellert stated with a small grin, "I cannot wait to see the future."

"So...I'll have to break in Azkaban and Durmstrang and this Island of Montecristo? I'll need Trevor." Heinrich deadpanned, raising an eyebrow at the thought that maybe the man was really starting to get senile.

"Trevor?"

"Neville's toad: he can escape from anywhere." Heinrich replied calmly, "And maybe I'll need explosives and..."

"Ignorant child," Gellert grumbled, "All you'll need is your head and your blood."

Heinrich remained silent, hoping for the old wizard to explain why he believed him capable of entering some of the most tightly secured, clearly, fortresses and come out unscathed with an army behind it.

"We will not enter those prisons head on and wand blazing, child." Gellert finally muttered, "We will use subtlety, move quickly and get the wards within the cornerstone of the fortress to our side. By doing that the wards will recognize you as their owner and by consequence you will have control over them."

"Why me? Why not do this yourself?" Heinrich replied perplexed.

"Because your blood descends from one of the founders while your magic calls upon all four of them. Since blood is in magic and magic is in blood, it is highly probably your blood can and will overrule any other descendant who is currently, of course, dead. The reference to 'the master of snakes' implies for example that the one needs to have parseltongue to proceed with the prophecy. Something you have."

"So...I'm needed for all three? When...When you die, I'll have to bleed on the cornerstone of this fortress too?" He asked, now cautiously trying to understand what exactly he could ask in exchange for his cooperation.

"Indeed." Gellert nodded. "Now let's hear your price for helping an old man to find his redemption."

"How in the bloody hell do you do that!?" Heinrich exclaimed back, "I know you can't be reading my mind!"

Gellert smiled, before replying with ease.

"I merely read your facial expressions. Like frowning brows, flinches, eyes moving sideways...you don't realize it, but it's more than enough to understand what you're thinking about without even having to read your mind...and you should know that there exists Legilimency as a branch of magic that does just that." The old wizard pointed out, before adding, "Let's hear it: what do you want to help me out on my quest for redemption, and in your quest for vengeance?"

"I don't know." Heinrich muttered, shaking his head. "I mean...sure, you're a bit wacko, but you don't seem...well..."

"A backstabber?" Gellert pointed out amusedly, "I can understand. You're expecting betrayals or false information, maybe even being stabbed in the sides where it hurts or having to suffer something bad. Well, rest assured: I'm doing this only because of my selfish desire to be redeemed. Granting you power in order to defeat Dumbledore, because you will eventually have to face him, is more than enough."

"Why did he betray you?" Heinrich asked, "Why don't you fight him instead of me?"

"Because he saw his change at going from fraud to genuine," Gellert sighed. "Instead of living a lie, Albus wished for it to become real. So he went from Transfiguration professor to Headmaster upon my body, and then became Supreme Mugwump on the bodies of countless others." The old man shook his head, "And I am old, Heinrich. Sure, maybe we could fight again, but I am no longer in possession of the elder wand, and Dumbledore had far more time than me to keep up his education in ancient and powerful spells...Being technically 'imprisoned' does not help my case." Gellert chuckled.

"And I have a chance?" Heinrich snorted back.

"Oh but you see, you have the highest chance of them all!" At these words, the smile on Gellert's face turned feral. "Because Heinrich, prophecies are so powerful that they tend to become truer the more one accomplishes them. The path to the sunken city...that is the path to Atlantis and of all the wonders that lay within that precious

city. Think, just think about the power that is dormant and just waits for someone to awaken it..."

"And what of the innocents? What of those caught in the crossfire?" Heinrich asked again.

"What of them?" Gellert replied, "What indeed." He nodded. "Good question, are you familiar with the Cold War?"

Heinrich raised an eyebrow. The cold war was the politically clouted set of skirmishes that happened in various sides of the world under different governments and for different reasons, funded by the URSS and the American State, both not willingly to come directly to blows. What it had to do with the situation, however...

"You want me...to bargain?" He asked.

"Dumbledore might hold the cards, Heinrich," Gellert spoke, "But he is just that: a hand. The card themselves can be both aces and jokers, they can be on his side...or secretly they can be the Maid."

"But he's Dumbledore! He's got the Wizengamot, Hogwarts, everyone believes him and..."

"And he's but a man!" Gellert roared back, "Do not confuse myth for truth, embellishment for reality! He is a man of blood and bones, and nothing will change that! He could not hold you at Hogwarts Heinrich, what makes you think he cannot be defeated!?"

"So..." Heinrich whispered, "I either remove him or get him killed?"

"No." Gellert replied softly, "You do both."

Heinrich shuddered, before calming down enough to recollect his thoughts. He could do this, could he? With Grindelwald's help it was a distinct possibility that he could actually win against Dumbledore. He was younger than the man and maybe, just maybe, Dumbledore could die of old age before he even had to face him. If nobody was wiser than them, then everything could work...if they managed to avoid getting caught while changing the wards that is. It was then that a thought crossed his mind.

"I'll do it. I'll help you." Heinrich began, "But what I want...is Azkaban."

Gellert merely smiled, before nodding to himself.

"Perfect. Now we know for sure...Azkaban, Nurmengard and Montecristo...the three fortresses and their spawns."

Heinrich scrunched up an eyebrow, not understanding until...

"You wanted me to make the choice!" He hissed at him, only for the old man to chuckle.

"As I told you before Heinrich: prophecies are fickle, they always tend to look for the easiest way to be fulfilled...and now tell me, why Azkaban?"

"I'm freeing some people out of there." Heinrich retorted calmly. "We'll do it before the start of Durmstrang's term, and I'll enroll with them...if I do this, then I'll get even more bargaining chips later on."

"Oh...you're speaking of Miss Granger and Mister Hagrid I suppose." Gellert commented with a thoughtful gaze, his right hand on his chin as he mused over it. "Indeed." The old man nodded. "Excellent plan...here's your wand, Heinrich."

The old wizard brought forth from his sleeve the boy's wand, and as Heinrich grabbed onto it he could feel something within him slightly snap and be removed. He didn't know what it was, or where it was, but he knew that, as his thoughts clouded upon the possible ways to get through Azkaban, and about the Dementors...something stirred and moved. His wand felt cool to the touch, and yet so unmistakably his that he knew, this time around, not to lose it ever again.

This was his gun, his weapon, his tool for murder and revenge. This was the instrument of his ascension from child to adult, because he had no choice, and probably he never had. For his parents, for those wronged, because it was the right thing, Heinrich didn't know and yet at the same time he did know why he was doing this.

He was tired of running. It was time somebody brought the ball back to the centerfield.

The Voice

"Now let's not be hasty in judging." He began carefully.

"Hasty? Hasty!? I'll give you hasty you rotten..." The Sorting Hat bellowed, "Free me now!"

"Nope." The Voice remarked, "Not yet."

"I demand freedom!"

"And I said no. What are you whining about to begin with? You spent most of your time on that shelf in the Headmaster's office, you should be happy I got you out of there."

"Now listen here, I'm not going to play turncoat for you!"

"Poor firsties," the Voice deadpanned, "The sorting hat will no longer be a national monument of Hogwarts."

"Wait a minute, where are you bringing me?" The voice of the hat was now fearful.

"The Marianne crevice is deep enough I suppose that nobody will ever find you in there." The Voice replied calmly, "Unless you wish to cooperate?"

"I already gave you the Sword of Gryffindor bloody hell! What more do you want!?"

"The other ring." The Voice said.

"The other ring? What are you...no. I won't."

"Won't or can't?"

"Both."

"I need that ring, hat."

"I will not hand it over."

"The ring of the Peverells, before I lose my patience."

"Do your worst, you won't get it out of me."

"All right then. Since you seem so determined..." The Voice commented, "Be prepared to cough it up the hard way."

The sharp screams of the hat were heard throughout the mansion, and as they did, people couldn't help but wonder if the old Riddle Mansion was once more possessed or not...

Author's notes

And we go on with the second chapter of the third book!

I hope Gellert was described fitfully as a sort of 'in search of redemption' Mengele, because that was (and still is) my characterization of him in canon. He did 'experiments' in youth that got him expelled from Durmstrang, and then later on he practically spat at Voldemort, claiming he wasn't afraid of Death.

To someone who asked when it's possible it would end: Considering an average (I hope) of twenty chapter per book on a seven book basis... 140 chapters? Of five thousand words each? So $140 \times 5000 = 700000$ words give or take. (IF it's finished, but I usually finish what I start, don't I?)

I hope people are enjoying the irony of the canon VS this fanfic. First book, philosopher's stone stolen and Harry without friends. Second book Harry befriends the basilisk and is hailed instead of scorned until the very end where the opposite happens. Third book...he's breaking in Azkaban to free people, rather than having an Azkaban prisoner visit him at Hogwarts.

Fun thing? I don't usually plan ahead. I only go with a bit of ploys and let the story write itself.

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 3

Heinrich looked baffled at the small circular platform hanging above a pool of warm water. He stood within one of the corridors that directly led to the side of the platform, while the other moved forward and disappeared into what he had come to term with being the laundry room. There were no house-elves doing the jobs after all, and thus if he wanted to have his stuff cleaned he had to do so himself. The warm basin of water doubled also as a bathroom, and he could just imagine the guards making patrols high above on the circular platform when down below political prisoners washed.

He sighed in annoyance as he took his bar of soap and began to scrub his hands. His fingers, and mostly his knuckles, were hurting like hell. If Flitwick had always been fixated on being precise during wand movements, then Gellert was merely a fanatic. There simply was no other way to explain just what the man deemed 'satisfactory' as exercise in wand motion. Still, the warm water did miracles for his mood. The difference between self-study and having a teacher at hand nearly twenty-four hours a day was made manifest after the second day.

He simply had no pauses, except eating, sleeping and washing. The fact that the prison was wide and held its facilities one further away from the other even helped him. He had come to the realization that he had to run to get from one side to the other of the prison, and that was probably an all too well thought architecture. First of all, the stairs brought one above a floor, or below one, only at the end of their hallway. There wasn't a centralized flight of stairs, so the criminal who wanted to escape had to basically pass through various rooms.

First, one would have to pass the kitchen, then the exercise grounds, the small garden within the belly of the prison, the laundry room, the bathrooms and finally the security's dormitories. In the midst of it all, the final ramps of stairs were out in the open, so that anyone who would watch even for a second outside the window would see the prisoners escaping and sound the alarm.

It was interesting to hear it all from the casual banter of Gellert. Sometimes he had seen an old castle with his family on the

television, and he had always wondered 'what had made the architect tick' and decided to build it in that way. Now he had the answers for at least Nurmengard. The idea had been of an ample looking prison, that wouldn't give the feeling of being constricted but at the same time would keep people in. With wizards, it strangely sufficed to merely have strong enough wards to discourage even attempting the escape.

Heinrich hadn't tried of course. He half suspected the English aurors were still monitoring everything around him, and because of that he rarely went around without being damn sure the wards could protect him. He hadn't even gone to the outside garden...which was really just a square of compressed dirt with a bench. The view during the sunset was probably breathtaking, but he'd rather be paranoid and safe than having his breath taken by the view and his freedom by the aurors.

He knew he was being paranoid. He knew that deep down he was exaggerating and that no harm could fall on him at the moment, and yet he still held doubts because, after all, he knew life apparently held it against him to be breathing. Having washed, he quickly got dried up with a simple warming charm and then headed off to where Gellert was without a doubt waiting him for his lesson. Luckily there were no pigs, but transfiguring one momentarily from a slab of stone was more than enough for testing curses.

Heinrich entered the exercising grounds to see the man smoking a pipe, a staff of wood had apparently been planted in the middle of the field and small steel-like tendrils seemed to be coiling and moving like snakes all around it.

"Well then, Heinrich," Gellert began, "Today we will learn why wizard need to be fast...your objective is to destroy that staff." The old wizard commented, "Of course the staff will lash out at you. Worry not, the whips are dull. They'll hurt but they won't saw you in half...like the spell normally would."

Heinrich shivered. He could but fathom how steel tendrils with the agility of snakes could work if sharp enough to cut through people. A staff with those things on would be a practical meat grinder...and he felt green at the thought that, without a doubt, the older wizard had already used it in battle or...experimented on it.

"Running in circles was out of..." A whip-like tendril of blunted steel came at him, forcing him to jump backwards. Jumping widely, however, he ended up being hit on the back by yet another tentacle that caught him in mid-air, before slamming him on the ground.

"Ouch!" He groaned as he shakily got back up. His legs wobbled, but his eyes narrowed at Gellert's smiling face.

"Don't look at me Heinrich: I'm not your enemy here." The older wizard spoke, "You need to dodge the barely necessary: if the enemy doesn't know if you'll succeed dodging or not, it won't follow up as fast. Of course that doesn't mean you can just dilly-dally either." Just to drive the point across, Heinrich found himself hit across the stomach by another tendril of steel, before being repeatedly whipped by half a dozen of others while trying to get away from it all.

"You understand you'd be already dead had he been armed to kill." Gellert commented offhandedly, "And the more you get hit the more tendrils attack ferociously: even if you do get hit by a curse after all, it is rarely lethal in the immediate circumstances." More than training to dodge, Heinrich was now being busy not getting lashed to the bones, rolling on the ground to avoid the snaps the transfigured construct seemed to enjoy sending at him.

"In the end however, it's exponential: as soon as you get hit eventually you will tire, you will feel pain and you will undoubtedly...die." Gellert finished his speech quietly, his eyes staring deeply into those of Heinrich, who was clawing at his throat in an attempt to get the staff's steel whips away.

He was lacking air to breathe and as he could feel blood gushing to his head, or probably just staying there, he couldn't help but wonder: why wasn't he using his wand?

"We're done for today on physical activities." Gellert snapped his fingers, and the thing just dropped him down on the ground unceremoniously. "The mind is always the best tool to train." Another snap of his fingers, and just like that a set of chess was transfigured from the ground upwards, while the staff splintered and resumed being just an ensemble of rocks and ropes.

"Well Heinrich? What are you waiting for?" Gellert raised an eyebrow, as Heinrich shook himself back into the fray. "An invitation? I've already given you one." The old wizard's fingers pointed at the chessboard with its pieces.

Heinrich flinched slightly as he wobbled over to the other side of the board, where the black pieces stood in wait for his order, the first move having already been made by the white pawn of Gellert's. Heinrich knew chess of course, he hadn't ever played it as nothing more than a pastime, and of course he had never won against his father, but he still knew how the pieces moved.

"Why chess?" Heinrich asked, making his own move.

"To let you catch your breath." Gellert retorted, "The bullshit on this," he pointed at the board game, "Being of any use in battle? Too wrong and too much idiotic to even fathom why people still believe that knowing chess is equivalent to knowing how to win in a skirmish."

"Then why are we playing this?" Heinrich queried, moving yet another pawn as he realized that Gellert seemed to be mirroring his own moves. "Shouldn't we read something?"

"No." Gellert replied, "You are learning, albeit what you are taught and what you grab for yourself is different."

He scrunched his nose for a second, not understanding the man's words, but deciding to let them fall off as he concentrated on at least trying to win the game.

"Not following me?"

"You...You're hard to understand." He mumbled, his eyes warily moving for a bit of a second towards the wizard's face before lowering back down on the chessboard. Was he already missing a pawn? He was already losing then? He'd get it back soon enough though, but it would result in Gellert moving the rook and he could eat that with the horse.

"Fire is hot." Gellert spoke, "You have fire in your hands, what do you do with it?"

"Burn something." He replied quickly, as if it was the easiest thing to say.

"Cook something." Gellert retorted, "Warm something. Melt something and many more...do you understand now? I can teach you that fire is hot, but what you do with that knowledge...that is up to you."

"And how does chess comes into the equation?" Heinrich asked, raising an eyebrow but stilling midway. "It doesn't." He muttered.

"Good enough." Gellert nodded, "You're right, it doesn't. Comparing strategies with chess is stupid, and yet some people still do. Do you know why?"

"Because...they'd do it even without chess?"

"To the point Heinrich, to the point." The wizard smiled, taking a deep breath as he quietly fumbled with his king, letting it fall. "Who claims that the destruction of the king marks the end of his troops? Does history say it true?"

"No." Heinrich found himself answering immediately, "There are hundreds of cases of men and women who fought even after their lord had passed that come to my mind, and many more are certainly...you're saying what I did wasn't for nothing?"

"You see Heinrich," Gellert stood up slowly, the chessboard slowly morphing back into a mound of dirt and then compressing itself into the ground, "Every action has a consequence."

He stood up in turn, walking behind the man who appeared old, as old as he could possibly be for being one hundred and eleven years old. He resembled nothing like Basileus and yet at the same time he had that kind of air around him, the very same that had probably brought the other Ravenclaws to flock around him.

"I have seen your spells." Gellert began, "You always start with Trudo, and then proceed with wasting time on the 'Cuspis Terrae' whereas 'Ico' would be far quicker. Why is it?"

"A shield is useful in battle." Heinrich replied, "I can mold the earth around me, to..."

"But in doing so, you weaken the spell itself."

He blinked before comprehension dawned on him. "The spell is made to launch rock lances, not to protect me."

"Precisely." Gellert nodded sharply, "Protego means to protect, and is the basic shield available. If executed correctly and in a timely manner, it can also deflect the spell back at the attacker. However it is a waste. Why?"

"It deflects spells that require to hit the target, not elementals ones or transfigurations that mold the terrain. Furthermore it only blocks forward or where you hold your wand: it is not omni-directional." Heinrich replied quickly, "Henry used to tell me that in his time, they used a different type of shield charm."

"Uhm? Whoever this Henry is, he knew his charms at the very least." Gellert supplied, flicking his wand out of his sleeve, "Now listen and watch carefully."

The wand didn't seem to be moving at first, but as Heinrich kept his eyes on it he realized it wasn't the tip for one thing that had to move...but the base of the wand itself. With clear voice, Gellert then roared, "Tego!"

A light shimmer surrounded the man's figure, giving him a faint ethereal hue that spread through his body as soon as the spell's pronunciation was cleared. "Consider this the ancestor of Protego. It's a full body shield which also deadens the blows received from blunt trauma...but it does not fully stop them! Keep an eye out in case you start bleeding internally." The old man explained, "It's a bit longer to cast than Protego, concerning the wand movements it is also more complicated, but it's also far more effective and can be a lifesaver in dire circumstances."

"Cast it and forget it?" Heinrich supplied carefully, taking his own wand out.

"Precisely. Now remember to keep your movement fluid. Precision and sharp turns are used for attacking spells, while softness and circles are usually related to protective ones. Curses require flourishes and generally the movements of the wand are to deliver

symbols that somehow reinforce the hex, jinx or curse in question." Gellert explained calmly as Heinrich found himself nodding to his every word. Going from nodding to actually doing the spell however, that proved to be more difficult.

"Tricky wand you have." The old wizard, having sat down on a nearby bench, commented after a few minutes of him trying to get to the shield spell to work, "It will not tolerate idiocy or second guessing...and you are not fully committed to your course of action after all."

He opened his mouth ready to retort, but closed it a few seconds later. After all it wasn't as if the old wizard was wrong: he didn't really think he could make it. Sure, he was training, but to what effect? This wasn't like some sort of Rocky movie where a montage with music could solve problems. This wasn't like some sort of film where a shade to black effect brought back a change of months and a stronger hero. This wasn't like writing on a book 'he trained for six months and came out stronger'. This was more like having to grit his teeth and hope that frustration didn't take the toll on him. It was more and more reminding him of the first year of Hogwarts: an uphill slope and battle for at the very least recognition, a battle that had ended with him broken and flighty at the minimum twitch. Yet here he was, actively fighting, actively seeking vengeance.

How in the bloody world was he going to make it out alive? He didn't even care about his birthday to come, gifts and presents seemed so insignificant in the face of the things to come. Playing around, toying with the computer, having Dungeons and Dragons sessions or the likes meant nothing when he was learning from the Magical First Reich Fuhrer himself how to gut an opponent or protect himself from shrapnel. Was this how the soldier kids of Africa and Middle-east countries learned? The only difference was that they were forced into their position by an unkind fate and handed a gun or some explosive.

He had been given, as it was his right to receive, a wand at his eleventh year of life. Just who had decided it was a smart thing to hand over wands to eleven years old? Wands with the power to destroy and annihilate, with enough power to level cities and kill dozens and hundreds at the same time? Who was the genius that had woken up one day and said: give weapons of mass destruction to the kids! They'll love you for it!

Heinrich bit his lips as he realized some words he had all but forgotten.

"The greatest enemy is oneself, young Raven."

He blinked as the memory hit him with the strength of a sledgehammer. He gasped and groaned as his brain hurt and a massive headache plummeted against his forehead, making him feel as if he had just gotten down with flu. He felt that something stir and move within himself, and he knew deep down that he had never been decisive. He had always second guessed himself, he had always wondered, questioned, queried. Was he really the best? Was he really the useful one? Was he really needed? Why did the prophecy have to target him? Why not someone else? Why, why, why? Asking oneself said questions and not coming up with answers worthy of being called such seemed to be his curse.

He was no longer Harry to begin with! How could Harry know the answers, if Heinrich didn't? Evil wasn't evil and good wasn't good, but then if the world was filled with shades of grey, which grey was the one worth fighting for? Then again...why was he even fighting to begin with? Wasn't battle a thing for the adults? Shouldn't an adult be the one to enter Azkaban, shouldn't an adult be the prophesized one? All these questions were what was weighing him down, and that much...that much Heinrich understood.

His wand could help him, but the only way for it to help him was for him to let it go, to stop querying and to merely act. To stop thinking and do. To stop...to stop being himself and become something else, something that he felt and knew was within him and that deep down wished to be freed. He knew who could enter Azkaban and he knew who could defeat Dumbledore...

He was within himself after all, a mere figment of his imagination locked down and hidden, demolished and left to rubble and sparks...but still there, menacing and ever present. He didn't know if it was the wand that brought him out and he didn't know if the wand had a conscience of its own, but he did know that he would go nowhere, if he did not find a reason he wholeheartedly agreed with.

"Who am I fighting for? What am I fighting for?" He mumbled, looking at his wand as if he was seeing a monster, "This...this is all

wrong." He whispered, "This isn't me. This is...this is someone else." He shook his head slowly, looking down at the ground, "I'm not a hero. I'm not...a protagonist of a story. I'm...I'm me. I don't want to have the fate of the world on my shoulders, I just want to..."

"You're afraid." Gellert spoke slowly, "Scared witless isn't it?" The old wizard added with an awry smile. "I think that fear...fear is a great thing to have, Heinrich. It is not a weakness, but a virtue not to be underestimated: I was fearless in youth and look at where I am now." He chuckled grimly, "Fear is good and all, but it shouldn't stop you from doing what you have to do."

"Wh..."

"Stop asking yourself that question, Heinrich!" Gellert yelled at him, his face red. "Asking yourself 'Why' or crying your way out is not going to help you. You're deep in hell and you've got to man up or curl up and die. You don't have another option; you will probably never have it! Don't you understand? Why do you think I hate prophecies so much!? You have no free will and all that you do will guide you towards it: the more you fight it the worse it will become! Accept and move forward! Stop looking back! Stop looking at what you were!"

His eyes menaced to start tearing up again, but he clenched his wand tightly and slowly nodded, before resuming at trying the spell with his wand. The result was the same as before: nothing. He couldn't just stop thinking on command, could he?

"We're done here." Gellert commented, "Until you get your mind in the right state, we can't do much else. Maybe it's a good thing: lay low, let the waters calm down, leave innocents in prison and dead people not avenged. Let's maybe have a group hug, uh? Would you like that Heinrich? A nice cup of chocolate maybe, so you can keep up moping about being in hell?"

"What the hell do you know about me!?" Heinrich yelled back, "Stop spewing your nonsense! You can't ask me all of this! You can't ask me to march to war and accept it like it's the norm!"

"The last couple of days you seemed to have no problems." Gellert retorted.

"I was in shock! I'd like you to tell me what you'd do in my shoes: you've just been kidnapped by magical Adolf and he told you that Mussolini killed your parents!"

Gellert raised an eyebrow, and then chuckled. His chuckle slowly turned into a howl of laughter as the old wizard bent in two, wiping away the tears from his eyes.

"It's not funny." Heinrich muttered, "Not funny at all."

"You know, people always said that the duel between me and Albus lasted three hours." Gellert began quietly, "But do you know where it happened?" Heinrich did not reply, instead eying him with a look of curiosity...as if the location of the duel could have been important. "It happened in Berlin. Among ruins and civilians screaming for life." Gellert whispered, "It happened all across the capital, with thunders and hails of snow, with fire crackling and the screams, the shrieks...the cries...do you know that I flung burning corpses at Albus during those three hours? Do you know that I collapsed cellars hoping to trap him in? Do you know we apparated one in front of the other in the most populated places, in order to avoid risking a first shot?"

The old wizard's face tugged its lips up in a bitter smile, "Do not speak of shock to me, Heinrich. If you do nothing then maybe no war will happen, but tell me...would you let Hitler get away with his final solution, blaming ignorance? Would you let innocents be condemned to death because you refused to act?" Gellert spoke quietly, "I am not going to make you into a force of good, a paladin or anything like that, kid." The architect of Nurmengard spoke, "But know this: your course is set. The only question is if you prefer to walk over rock or quicksand to reach your destination."

Heinrich closed his eyes, biting his tongue from replying once more on the unfairness of it all. He hadn't given his name to this cause and yet here he was. Maybe it was cowardly to try and backpedal away from it all...had he known this would be his destiny, he would have snapped his wand the moment he had taken it in his hands and...

No. He wouldn't have. Power was in the wand, and the wand was all that made him special...no. It was the blood. The blood made him a wizard, the blood marked him and his destiny was foretold. Yet he

wondered, as he quietly began to try and cast the spell once more, if free will really existed...and if it did, and prophecies had the power to remove it, then he just hoped that once that prophecy was done he'd be able to return to make his own choices.

"You won't get anywhere if you don't resolve your inner conflicts, Heinrich." Gellert commented, slightly angered at his lack of results probably, as the sun had begun to set over the horizon, coloring the blue sky of a rosy hue. "Maybe we should try another method." The old wizard spoke, "One that is sure to make you understand."

"Eh?" Heinrich had barely exclaimed that single word that his axis of gravity shifted, as he found himself being brought up in the air before left to crash on the ground. "Ow." He could briefly see Gellert Grindelwald do it again, flicking his wand up and down and forcing him both up against the ceiling and then letting him fall on the ground.

"You see, I'm soon going to start adding pikes to the floor." The wizard said offhandedly. "Eventually...you'd best know the spell or suffer a bad death."

"You can't do..." The ground impacted against his body again, his chest constricting from the weight applied, before he gasped for air as soon as he was lifted again by the strength of the magic. "You said..." Once more he was slammed on the ground hard.

"Use the damn spell Heinrich! Use that spell or suffer the consequences!" Gellert roared as small rotund mounds began to appear on the ground, hitting him and making him feel the coppery taste of blood on his tongue as he was slammed against the ground again and again, every time harder.

"It's but a word, Heinrich! Say it! Mean it! Do you want to die child!? Then I was wrong and I'll look again! Then maybe someone else will come in your place! Come on, say it!" The mounds became spikes, and just as Heinrich's hand clenched his wand tightly to his body, his wrist sore and his thoughts drifting away, there was but one thought in his mind at the end of it all.

To survive.

"Tego!"

And then the pikes impacted against his entire frame as he closed his eyes, expecting the feeling of flesh being punctured and blood gushing out.

"Good job." Gellert grumbled, "So I need to put you in near death situations then. Good to know." The feeling of the pikes turned softer, as Heinrich realized that indeed, he was surrounded by the light gleam of the Tego shield while the ground resumed its normal appearance.

"Are you frigging nuts you senile old fool!?" Heinrich yelled, standing back up, "What is it, trying to kill me?!"

"Of course not." Gellert retorted rolling his eyes, "But maybe, just maybe, we can make something out of you by the end of summer."

Heinrich grumbled, before turning and walking away slightly pissed off. Just what was with people and trying to put him in dangerous or deadly situations? He needed time to get the spells right! He had mastered the Wingardium Leviosa after days of trying it! Gellert couldn't truly expect him to master everything in so little time, right? The man was after all a veritable pool of knowledge, without a doubt dark, but still...it was preposterous to expect him to shine in less than two months.

Yet that was the day the thing inside of him stirred again. This time, however, it latched on firmly.

Lillian Potter

"Lillian! Come on out please!" Her father's voice came in a pleading tone from outside the door of her room, and yet she just huffed and placed her head deep against her books. She had started her work the moment she had gone back home. She had a lot of stuff to catch up to, and she didn't doubt for even a second that she would need every single scrap of knowledge. Harry had been so knowledgeable and if he had managed to escape Hogwarts, then he was without a doubt dangerous too.

She would need to be at the very least twice as strong as him, to be able to capture him and bring him back to be saved from the Imperius curse. If only her father understood it and stopped trying to

get her to play Quidditch out in the garden... How could he even think she had time for Quidditch after what had happened this year!? She hated having to let her father down, but she didn't have any doubts on what was more important between playing and having her family back together.

"Lillian?" The voice this time around changed, belonging to her mother who softly knocked at the door. "It's time for lunch dear." She groaned as she slammed the book close. She had barely understood the third chapter! How was she going to get everything done during the summer with all these interruptions!?

"Mom! Bring the food in! I've got to study!" She yelled, reaching for the door and unlocking it before opening it.

"Now listen here!" Lily Potter huffed, her hands against both sides of her body. "Food is eaten at the table with the family!"

She groaned back at her mother, shaking her head. "I've got to study mom! I...I need to measure up to Harry to..."

"Nonsense." Lily snapped, "You will do nothing of the sort young lady!" The red haired woman fiercely exclaimed, "You will catch up your missed year, do your homework and then be done! You won't go even a mile near...near him." The last few words were merely muttered, before the green eyes narrowed hard on her own, "Swear it, Lillian. Swear you won't do anything of the sorts. Let Dumbledore and us take care of everything, all right?"

"But...but..."

"Dumbledore is evil." Her brother had said that with so much conviction, that she had just been about to blurt it out. She barely held the words back in her mouth, as her mother went on to rant again.

"Well then young miss? What is it going to be?" Her mother huffed, tapping her right foot against the wooden floor. "Do I have to take away your wand?"

"No!" She exclaimed out quickly, "I...I won't do anything rash mom! But please...I thought you'd be happy I'm studying this hard!"

Lily rolled her eyes, a small smile appearing on her face.

"Of course I am." She nodded, "But..." She sighed, her face becoming slightly weary, "You need to understand you're just a kid Lillian. Let the grown-ups do their job all right? Study hard and have a good summer: that's all you have to do, understood?"

She nodded back to her mother, before moving forward to engulf her in a tight hug.

"Love you."

"Love you too." Her mother replied, "Now go wash your hands. Lunch's on the table already."

She beamed a smile at her mother, before heading off to the bathroom to wash her hands. Once she closed the door behind her, however, she began to look at her reflection in the mirror. She puckered her lips before letting them distend back, and then wistfully began to play with a lock of her hair, red once more. Her hazel eyes settled on her reflection that seemed to sport a sad face and a grim demeanor.

"No use moping." Lillian muttered trying to put some cheerfulness in her voice, "And she forgot to make me swear after all." She winked at her reflection then, and then swiftly washed her hands and left the bathroom. She'd get some more hours of study and then maybe fly a bit with the broom. It was really nice to feel the air compress against the face after all.

Author's notes

Another chapter, this time we see a lot of Heinrich and a bit of Lillian. I always found it kind of nonsensical how people expect young kids to suddenly become heroes and fighters. I mean, had I been a normal eleven year old at Hogwarts, I would have ran from the troll, not stuck my wand in his nose...or I would have run again and again because damn it, lots of things were bloody scary in that place! I think Harry portrayed as a 'Always go straight, never goes backwards' is a bit of wishful thinking.

Doubt is a natural part of the human processing brainpower. We naturally put doubt in all things we want to do that aren't part of a

routine after all. Like going right instead of left at a turn and starting to say 'But is it the same? Shouldn't I turn back? I know the map says it's fine, but what if it isn't?' of course these types of thoughts happen extremely fast and are usually not so much put forward, but in Harry's...sorry, Heinrich case they are quite needed.

The kid's got a hefty prophecy on his head after all.

I realize I should try and make some sort of syllabus of the spells Harry is using, or that I have affectionately called 'Warfare' spells.

They are variation of normal ones, albeit with shorter names.

'Tego' for example means cover, hide, cloak, conceal, bury, protect is the last of its meaning, while 'cover' is the first. Considering all of them together, Tego is a full body shield against small jinxes and blunt force trauma.

'Trudo' means push and thrust (Hence the concussive/piercing effect)

'Ico' means wound and pierce.

'Cuspis Terrae' means spike of earth.

'Custodio' means watch over/defend

'Cingo' means gird, circle and surround but also 'prepare oneself' (hence the wand floating in direction of attack)

For the 'coursework' explained to Bellatrix in a previous chapter, it is actually stuff I saw on the wiki. There is an 'earth course' for 'people who like to dig'... and a ghou studies that centers on ghosts and the likes (probably ghouls and inferi too) And you know the saying 'if there's one there's the other too'

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 4

"Time and time again," three purple colored spheres departed together with a cacophony of sounds and a flurry of what seemed to be wings of a dark red color, soon followed by a shattering sound of broken glass, while the ground rumbled as if an earthquake was just then happening. Few seconds later, a veritable hail of glass shards flung back together with explosive shrapnel of wooden consistencies while dark thick black smoke oozed forward in the shape of a sort of hand.

The next moment a strong gust of wind erupted and knocked away the smoky hand, as a volley of dark orange and dark green lights flew back as a courtesy, before few greyish and smaller pebbles launched themselves in the air and landed with unexpected graciousness in front of their intended target.

Heinrich Grindelwald had enough cool, in that moment, to wave his wand in front of him in a sharp right to left movement with a sharp jab forward, "Flatus!" was what he screamed as he made a barrel roll backwards, "Scutum!" he added just to be extra sure, as he ran to the other side of the room, the bits and pieces of furniture having banged together to form a bronze floating shield following him, which was being puckered by yet another hail of curses.

"I said that you should think laterally!" Once more Gellert Grindelwald spoke just as Heinrich tripped on a transfigured pebble that had returned back to its original form of...metal bucket. Tripping, he fell on the ground just as two sickly yellow curses hit him on the back. The sharp bouts of pain were soon replaced with tremors, chills and terrible sense of nausea as his inner organs were literally beginning to liquefy beneath the strain of the dark curses.

A flick of Gellert's wand later, and while trembling and probably with a sickly green colored face, he was no longer risking to die. Pushing against the back of the wall to catch his breath, Heinrich looked into the blue eyes of his teacher and personal torturer and sadist. It had been two weeks. In two weeks, he had been subjected to some of the vilest curses Gellert Grindelwald could have come up with. Of course, this was relating to those that were not immediately lethal.

The British thought that 'Avada Kedavra' was the worst thing ever to have been birthed. After all it killed and was unblockable. They never heard of the old Roman curse 'Merior' or its variants 'Emerior' and 'Demerior'. The first withered away a person's inner reserve of water while at the same time making holes in the inner organs of the victims as if they had spent months as dead corpses. The variants were strangely more merciful, as the first brought the victims into a coma and slowly left them to die while the second simply killed the target by making their hearts explode.

'Avada Kedavra' was nothing. It was actually a painless and kind form of mercy killing to say the least. Heinrich shivered at the thought of what was Gellert's favorite spell. It wasn't a curse or a hex, but a Charm. The Charm changed the entire weight of the human boy by making the skin heavier and the bones brittle. It resulted in squashed human pancakes and Heinrich retching for three minutes straight after seeing it on a transfigured pig from a stool.

Still, it wasn't as if he had much of a choice. Gellert had come to term with the fact that he could train him only as long as he actually tried to kill him, as he wouldn't be 'in the right state of mind' otherwise. The feeling of organs liquefying and blood vessels exploding wasn't of the best, but it still was nothing compared to Bellatrix' Crucios. The fact that Grindelwald actually taught him things and wasn't entirely mad was a welcomed bonus to him.

The furniture in the room was repaired within mere seconds, and as Heinrich slowly walked over to his 'father' to get his opinion on the fight, he couldn't help but feel a bit nervous. This hadn't been the first skirmish they had fought, but it had been the first one he had been confident in enough to say he had fought well. Transfiguration was apparently something he was good at, and the idea of transfiguring noxious vapors into a more dense fog-like form had actually been his idea...something he prided on.

"Well." Gellert began slowly, "Two weeks huh? Got you here on the eleventh, two days of rest and now it's the twenty-seventh of July...well, what can I say? I'm an excellent teacher." The man nodded, "You're still no better than dead meat, though at least you might manage to bring down with you a sucker or two." The old magical Hitler spoke quietly, before humming a light tune. "Time to plan then: we've got to get you your birthday gift after all."

"What are you talking about?" Heinrich asked perplexed.

"I'm talking about Azkaban, Heinrich." Gellert rolled his eyes, huffing in annoyance, "We're working on finesse, not brute force."

"Oh." Was all that he replied as he blinked carefully, "But...you didn't teach me the Expecto Patronum..." He whispered. His knowledge of Dementors' physiology came more from the curiosity in his first year concerning the core of his wand, and the fact that he had quite nothing else to do but study and read. He had thought they'd be going after having been taught how to do the spell, and yet...

"There is a common belief," Gellert spoke, "That dark wizards cannot use the Expecto Patronum spell," he added carefully, "There is also another belief that states that they do not need to do so, because Dementors do not attack evil since they are evil themselves." The old man smiled bitterly, "And that spell in particular? All that flashy display of silver light? Do you want us captured my boy? We're going on a mission that requires finesse, not wand blazing!" Gellert shook his head slowly.

"I will teach you a...let's say a state of mind, all right? It's really the only reason Dementors don't attack Dark wizards as much as they should: Despero." And then Heinrich's world went black.

"Here you are. You scrawny thing, you are the one born with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord?" A suave voice spoke, old and crinkly was the face that looked at him with dark eyes as long fingers grabbed a hold of him, lifting him up from the playpen. "Don't know me? You're not even crying I see...good," the man added with an afterthought. "You'll do nicely. Revenge is a dish served cold..." Then he turned around to leave, holding him against his shoulder. Harry didn't know why he was being brought away, but he saw that in the playpen there was another small figure sleeping. He didn't want to leave the house and so he screamed.

Heinrich opened his eyes blearily, smelling a strange aroma in his nostrils as he could hear Gellert's voice commenting.

"Well. Drink it lad: it is coffee mixed with chocolate. The Italians call it 'Mocaccino'...albeit it usually also has cream on top of it." He didn't stop to think much on the moment, instead merely accepting the

warm glass with his hands and taking sips of it quickly. It was warm and burned through his throat as it went down, the mixture of caffeine waking him up as chocolate did what it did best: calm him down.

"What...what was that?" Heinrich asked carefully. The thing had...he had only seen the wand depart a light black fog, right? Yet it had been but a puff of said dense smoke and he...he had lost it. His mind was a bit fuzzy still, but he remembered an old man, didn't he? A man with dark eyes...and dark hair. Where had he seen such a figure already?

"Despero." Heinrich flinched as Gellert spoke, "Is a spell that mimics the natural aura of a Dementor. It also eclipses the other similar auras' effects nearby, thus making you one of them and at the same time immune to them. Of course it doesn't work if a Dementor decides to kiss you, but I hope we won't come to have to do that to reach the cornerstone of Azkaban."

"You just said the word...you...didn't move the wand." Heinrich whispered back, "W-Why don't the...good guys use it too?"

"Because do use it, one must start by focusing his mind on despair itself." Gellert replied, "Not just any form of despair, no. The deepest one, the most pitch black, the one that has no hope of safety...one must imagine what it would feel like to be completely and utterly in despair: without hope for redemption, without hope for safety, without hope for a future or even a present. A hopeless situation does not mean despair, but despair is usually found in hopeless situations...and yet it's not enough."

"W...what did you think about?" Heinrich asked quietly, looking wearily at the old man.

"In Berlin, there was this cellar built beneath an old pub." Gellert began quietly, "The Russians were storming in and the few Germans with a gun were answering back. There was a tanking coming up from the road, and I apparated there, in the middle of the gunfight. Albus was just behind me of a little bit," the old wizard whispered, "The tank shot at the same time I collapsed the building on Albus. The cellar didn't stand a chance."

"S...so?" He asked meekly.

"So...what if in that cellar was a young child, afraid of war? What if...what if the child had been in there and heard the gun rattling, and then the building collapse and then the explosion? What if he had found himself alone among the corpses of the others, trying to claw his way out of the rubble and failing as his strength gave way and he died of thirst and hunger? Tell me, is there anything that could define despair more than this?"

"It...It didn't happen, right?" Heinrich spoke slowly, "It's...it's just something to imagine, yes?"

"But it happened, Heinrich," Gellert replied gravely, "Somewhere in the world, a child probably suffered from this. Somewhere in the world people die clawed by despair that hangs against their very souls...and tell me, Heinrich, tell me if it isn't enough to bring despair to your own soul too." The old man made a bitter smirk, before shaking his head slowly, "That despair is what makes the spell strong. We will start working on it tomorrow. For now, get a good day of rest."

Heinrich merely nodded, before wobbling back on his feet and starting to walk towards his room. He'd collapse on his bed there and sleep his worries away...what he had seen however...it seemed so awfully familiar. But that...those words that Gellert had said, they were filled with all the bitterness of old men that have seen the horrors of war and lived to tell the tale. The story furthermore seemed...seemed so real it made him shiver.

It placed things in perspective after all. To that point in life, all he thought of as 'despair' was him being forced to play in this sort of 'war' among two sides...he had never expected this. He had never thought that somewhere, somehow, someone could be in a worse condition than his. He still had magic at least: he could still change things and try to make things better. How could he just even think about letting everything slide by and stay in a corner, when he had the power to change things? He wouldn't run anymore...not after this. Not after learning of this.

Hermione Granger

Rat-man. She had decided to call the wizard that could morph into a rat with that name. It was either that or admitting she was having

hallucinations. The small man was bald and looked quite a bit over his fifties, yet it was only because of the situation. Even she knew that somehow her lineaments had gone all old and probably her face had her aged of at least a good dozen of years. It was the prison.

Azkaban was not a happy prison. Azkaban wasn't even a Guantanamo however. Azkaban, simply put, was a place to let wizards die in without a fuss. The guards themselves were shrouded in a pitch black fog that made them resemble wraiths or ghosts. Every time one passed near her, to bring food or merely to look at her through the bars as if she were but a piece of meat left to hang, she'd feel all happiness leave her and despair claw at her innards.

She had some hope in the beginning, that there was a type of appeal or anything that would get her out. She had hoped that once Lily had been no longer petrified, she'd come and visit and get her out of there. The girl had that invisibility cloak after all: sure, it would be law-breaking, but they had been wrong to begin with! There was just no way she could survive much longer in this place. The only reason she ate was because every now and then the rat-man would come around to ensure she did.

The man never said his name, hence the need to call him Rat-Man or something like that. It kind of sounded like a super-hero name actually, but it was still better than nothing...and at least he brought news of Hagrid. The half giant was deeper down the corridor, and sometimes she could swear she heard him wail and cry about how sorry he was to his father. Hermione would have wanted to say something kind to him too, but every time her strength was sapped away when one of the Dementors came about.

She didn't know how many days had passed, what she did know was the guards had yet to even make an appearance in her cell to even check on her. It was always Dementors. Wasn't this supposed to be a mild cell? Dementors brought her food, and she suspected they even entered at night to take her chamber pot and empty it, because it explained many things...mainly the nightmares. She hadn't thought much about it, but the nightmares...they were always so vivid.

In those dreams she was paralyzed, blinking at a white ceiling as she couldn't move while another figure walked in, a figure with her very own face and with a pearly white smile. The only difference was

that this other 'her' was evil. She would pluck at her hair repeatedly, and then leave her there. Sometimes she would be force-fed something vile too. She couldn't even gag it out, and the taste was of the foulest possible.

Evil Hermione always called her mudblood, in a snappish tone, saying that she was a good for nothing worthy only of being at best a toy for some powerful wizard. She hadn't understood why it had fallen on her. She had never understood why she had to suffer through all this...it wasn't her fault: it wasn't her hands that had done the deed. Someone else had! Someone else...and yet she remembered nothing, and just because of that she was found guilty.

She had hoped her parents would believe in her, but in the end they had just looked sad at her face as they brought her away. She had wanted to scream it hadn't been like that, she had wanted to scream and yet the Aurors had brought her away in silence, under a spell to prevent her from speaking, from saying goodbye.

Tears began to streak down her face as she realized that her thoughts moving to the most moments of her life could mean but one thing. She blearily looked forward for a second, and saw the familiar sign of a Dementor hovering just outside her cell. The figure clad in the dark cloak seemed an emaciated burned skeleton. Its voice was a mixture of shrieks and laments when it spoke, but gladly it never did in front of her. Only, she heard them speak sometime, in a strange language that sent shivers down her spine and made her skin crawl. She would have done anything to have her ears tarred to avoid hearing them.

She would have done anything to anyone just to get out of that horrible place.

"What?" She hissed, in a snarl. It wasn't lunch hour and it wasn't time for dinner. There wasn't a shower time of course and nobody ever asked for a bit of exercising time outside. The central courtyard was practically the nest of the entire flock of Dementors...it was a suicide. 'Going out for a walk' was the common term for those prisoners who couldn't stand it any longer and asked the Dementors to off them. The Kiss was said to be something painless...leaving behind but a dried up husk.

She couldn't help but shiver as the door of the cell clanked open. No. This wasn't supposed to happen. They couldn't have come in to kiss her, right? No. No. The tears, the cries, the pain. She was going to die and she didn't want to die, she was going to be kissed and she didn't want to, she had yet to beg forgiveness or be proved innocent. No. No. She was innocent: she knew she was innocent so why was that bony hand moving closer to her face? Why!?

"Follow." The Dementor shrieked close to her as she had been trying to meld with the wall with her back, screaming and crying and trying to claw her way out through the thick stone wall. Hermione watched in fright as the Dementor hovered out of her cell, and then pointed with its finger...towards the deeper areas of the prisons.

"No." She choked down a sob, "No, please...no." She knew what it was. She knew what it meant. Deeper down the hole Alice went wasn't it? Deeper down until she died, because she had so bloody fucking stupid to follow a mad bunny down a hole. She wasn't going to, no. She was going to stay there in the corner and remain there until...

"FOLLOW!" The shriek was stronger now, nearly deafening her as she screamed back in pain. The bony finger of the Dementor still pointing and...and she knew she wouldn't move. The Dementor had other ideas however, because it moved closer. Cries, tears, whining and fear clawed at her entire body as she was pushed out of the cell and in the corridor...and from there she ran. She ran until another Dementor stopped her from going straight and forced her to turn, she ran until she nearly fell off a flight of stairs and yet she kept on running. Maybe she could escape, maybe she could...

"HERE!" The shriek came at the end of her road. It led her into a smaller cell, one deep within the bowels of the prison, near...near a flight of stairs. Too close to too many of them, too close, too deep, they couldn't force her...and the bars closed behind her, and there she cried collapsing on the ground. They had brought her away. They had brought her deeper in. They had...they had decided to bring her where those who waited being kissed stood. The only positive note was the calendar, placed outside and on the stairs.

Thirtieth of July. It recited...as she huddled herself into a corner, she couldn't help but cry...wasn't the thirty-one Lillian's birthday?

Severus Snape

"Malfoy's done it, Albus." Severus remarked drily. "I told you it reeked of one of Lucius' ploys to get you sacked. He won't let the defense pass and he's pushing for the sentence of Kiss to be executed in a hush manner." The implications, of course, weren't lost to both of them.

He was eying with distaste the old man eating with ease a lemon drop, sitting at the other side of the desk with calm. The twinkle in the old man's eyes was gone, replaced with the usual cold duress of steely light blue that so many times the enemy of Albus had seen as the last thing on Earth. Not that Severus was afraid of staring in the man's eyes since the old Headmaster didn't resort to Legilimency on him: he knew he had him in his pocket. How deep he was, however, was something Albus had never deemed to look out for.

"My dear Severus," Albus began quietly, "All is well...you may rest assured the matter will be settled with ease." Of course it would. Severus didn't need to read the Headmaster's mind either to understand. The man had known since the beginning who had been the real culprit all along. He had known and he had kept silent. He had been waiting for Lucius to overstretch like the man was doing in that moment, by forcing the execution of a Kiss sentence. The man would then hush it up on a suicide for the young muggleborn girl, and then he'd claim the Headmaster to have given off to the executioner's axe the wrong murderer.

Of course this would unsettle the board of Governors, who would get all mighty indignant over the fact that Albus Dumbledore had condemned an innocent child to be kissed and had nothing to prevent it by deliberately being the one to accuse the girl. Lucius would result out as the conscientious citizen who had had no reason to disbelieve the words of the Headmaster...and fault would fall on the old man.

Unless the man came up with a way to bring Lucius out in the open, after which it would probably be the opposite to happen...especially if...

"You know who brought the diary to Hogwarts." He accused. His voice lowering to a hiss, "You knew all along." Albus, for his part, merely smiled back and nodded.

"Ah Severus, I admit I did not have all the pieces in the beginning, but after I was told of a most daunting event I realize that sometimes things aren't done by a single person, but by more than one."

"So Granger's still an accomplice?" Severus replied hotly. "Of who?"

"No, my dear boy," Albus replied, "Not Miss Granger."

"Scamander?" Severus asked cautiously, "Or are you implying...Voldemort?"

"Only a house-elf could have entered the kitchens and meddled with the food delivered to Mr. Scamander." Albus noted quietly, "A swapping spell or a notice-me-not charm would have been noticed. Only cooked food could be sent up, and only by the hands of a house-elf. It's within the wards of the school since you know it as well as I do that Hogwarts house-elves are not permitted to harm the students."

Severus' right eye raised its eyebrow slowly, before both eyelids closed quickly. He could feel blood draining from his face as he shook his head slowly.

"You can't be accusing Draco of all people."

"Why would you think I'm accusing your godson?" Albus asked back gently, his grandfather tone still there as if they weren't possibly discussing to harm yet another child.

"If not him who then? Lucius wouldn't have trusted something this...this articulated to someone else, and Draco has Dobby at Hogwarts, and since he's a private house-elf he can do as Draco orders him. If...if the diary went from Draco to the Granger girl, then..."

"But my dear boy, how could Draco cause chaos in the common room with a Freezing curse, when he was next to mister Scamander?" At that notion, Severus' blood ran cold.

"No."

"Of course, it appeared that whoever did this was at the very least on the sixth or seventh year, or maybe even a professor to begin with." Dumbledore spoke seriously, his eyes never leaving Severus' face.

"You can't be..." He couldn't be accusing him, could he? He had nothing to do with it and...

"Now, Colin Creevey did not die because he was gutted, but because he was killed with the Avada Kedavra...on the same night that Mr. Scamander and Miss. Potter had their...altercation concerning my goodness of heart." Here Albus smiled kindly, "So the boy is innocent, for he had an alibi...but with Miss. Potter out, who was there to see Miss. Granger?"

Severus' eyes narrowed ferociously.

"You just said she couldn't be..."

"Of course not, but someone with Miss. Granger's face could." Dumbledore spoke slowly, "And if that somebody held a bit of contempt against Mr. Scamander the next morning, and was caught, then it would have come to term with accusing him publicly...luckily, or unluckily, she was not caught."

"Someone used Polyjuice to impersonate Miss. Granger?" Severus asked quietly. "But who? Why? How could they have..."

"Of course a prominent member of Mister Malfoy's family would have been sorely missed or at least noticed, unless..."

"I..." Severus' words died in his mouth, as he felt the bitter test of bile rise to the back of his throat. "She was..."

"So you see Severus," Dumbledore spoke carefully, "The execution of Miss. Granger will bring great shame to Malfoy's family and, of course..."

"You will redirect the fault to Lucius Malfoy." Severus shook his head calmly, biting down his tongue and clenching his fists. It was just another face after all, another sacrifice for the Greater Good of Albus.

"If evidence were to be planted that somehow...he had gotten his hands on such an artifact in Knockturn alley, possibly in that shady shop you sometimes visit...well then, you have your job cut for you this summer." Albus finished, practically dismissing him as he walked as calmly as he could towards the door.

"Oh, and Severus?" Albus asked gently, making him turn his head to raise an eyebrow at the old man.

"Do not betray my expectations." Having so gravely spoken, Severus merely nodded and left the room. He would have felt a bit dirty, if it weren't for the fact that he knew that, deep down, he was being suspected of having helped too.

After all, just how could the woman stock on that much Polyjuice potion to last throughout the year? Someone had to have supplied it to her, but the question was...who?

Heinrich Grindelwald

"Desparo." He whispered, the sick cover of dread and despair covering his entire body just like the Tego spell would, only this one made him feel as if a century of grime and lime had settled on all of his skin and bones. He tightly held on to the belief of being alone, clawing his way out of a deep pit with water rising to drown him. He held on to the feeling of being Crucio-ed to death while darkness and mocking yells came at him. He heard the gunshots and the strikes of war, he felt the feeling of pure unbridled betrayal clash against any lingering hope he could have.

He was despair, and just like the other man near him, clad in a dark black dense fog that masked his entire body and made him look like a Dementor from afar, he too was probably looking the same. They briefly touched the small wooden plank that had become a portkey, and afterwards with a sickening feeling of something pulling at his navel, he was no longer there, in Nurmengard...but in Azkaban in the dead center of the island: the only safe place they could land without immediately launching an alarm.

To the wards, it would be as if just two more Dementors had been birthed, and nobody would wonder any more about it. They were invisible to the eyes of the Dementors that felt emotions like happiness and good feelings. They were visible from afar as new

Dementors, and the higher levels of the prison wouldn't see anything different. Their only hope was to hover convincingly and yet he knew he should not hope, and he did not.

It was difficult, but not impossible. He knew despair was gnawing at his soul and he knew he had to feed it with thoughts of failure and defeat, and yet they managed to float gently, to move quietly towards the doors thick and filled with protections. Only Dementors could pass through, and yet they didn't need to worry.

Two Dementors had just hovered through, forcing the doors open as a flock literally flew inside the central courtyard. Less guards around to them, and yet in his strength to keep his darkness deep and not to hope it would be easy he missed the most important thing of all: the fact that once the two of them entered the hallway, not a Dementor was seen around them as the doors closed behind their backs. Invisible as they were to the Dementors, something was wrong in the hallway in that moment.

"Notice-me-not charms. Now." The other 'Dementor' growled, as Heinrich found himself whipping his wand out quickly, followed by Gellert himself.

"Let's move. Cornerstone is near the execution chambers." Gellert whispered, no longer needing to hover and soon being followed by him...maybe they would actually succeed in this mission without troubles: everything was going their way, and if it kept up...as Hope blossomed in his soul, he could feel his shroud of despair suddenly slip out of his fingers. He tried to hold on to it, but it was too late. As soon as it disappeared he could feel that of Gellert bash against his entire body, forcing him on the ground and clutching his head in pain.

"Pettigrew, you will most handsomely be rewarded," the old man spoke as he held tightly onto his body. He didn't have a choice. He was wailing and crying but no sound was escaping his lips. He could see a man standing kneeling in front of the older wizard, pale and shivering. "Stand up, Pettigrew."

"M...Master, I..." As the figure trembled and stood, there was silence for but a minute. A minute that however made him stop crying, as he could see the man look paler and paler...yet the man's face was familiar too, wasn't it?

"So...you thought your pitiful plan would work, Albus? Interesting...thankfully I did not trust you with the date of my departure for Godric's Hollow, Pettigrew." The old man's voice was silky, as a wand came into view.

"...I...I'm..." Quickly, the man held onto a button of his shirt, "Away!"

For a sheer moment, nothing happened. Then the old wizard laughed. He laughed so hard that he couldn't help but slowly lower his wand from the man's body.

"Oh Pettigrew...you poor fool. Haven't you realized it yet? You've been had."

The look on the man's face was of absolute terror, before a thick red light hit him straight in the chest.

"Well then...I could end it here and take you under my wing now, but the prophecy would still stand, wouldn't it?" The old wizard mused, locking eyes with him still held by his hands. "Well...maybe we can do something about that too, isn't it right, Harry?"

When Heinrich wearily opened his eyes again, he was pinned against the wall by Gellert, who was holding his mouth closed and his wand in the other hand. Just behind Grindelwald's back, however, loomed a group of persons walking towards the stairs near them. They were just passing close by, and yet Heinrich couldn't help but widen his eyes in shock and fear.

For passing by no more than two feet from him, was his biological family accompanied by the Minister and a few of its associates.

Author's notes

By now, all data is given on who the culprit for the second year was.

For those who still haven't understood it:

Narcissa + Dobby the House Elf.

Plot: The Diary of Riddle is powered up in the beginning by Narcissa (Gives credit for her stay in St. Mungos, in a private ward of course since she's a Malfoy and she's rich) and then handed over to the

Weasley Family by Lucius. Ginny speaks with a fairly more powerful Tom who manages thus to corrupt her and bring her in Slytherin. (Albeit Corrupt is such a bad term). Then Narcissa gets Hermione and her parents in Diagon Alley, catching them alone and knocking all three out. Hermione is substituted to the 'nerve-wracked' Narcissa in the hospital and held under sedatives, while Narcissa becomes Hermione. From there, Narcissa enters Hogwarts and heads with the Gryffindor. She bunks together with the Girl-Who-Lived and later on is the one who takes the Diary from Slytherin, since having Draco with Dobby she just had the house elf bring her the diary. To top it off, Dobby is ordered to lie to Draco about what is going on (reason the elf self-punishes himself when Draco is asking) Dobby indeed did the deal with the Honor Guard of Harry, grabbing the snake one night and 'cooking' him. Since however the fault would have gone to him immediately (And Albus still gave it to him) Narcissa entered the Kitchens and butchered the elves that had their turn in the moment. 'Diffindo' did the trick.

Since the Basilisk apparently didn't like Diary-mort+Narcissa, Diary-mort had to come up with another plan, (meanwhile bringing his anger out on Creevey, who passed by in the wrong moment of course). As Narci-mione is the one that sends the freezing curse at Harry during the first message events, she launched it from the Gryffindor side, as she was the mysterious curser who also made his feather explode albeit in the beginning the Diary was acting out of pettiness for having a kid so young get the best of him and founding the 'King' of Slytherin as Narcissa had written to him in the diary. Diary-mort is then passed over to Ernest Macmillan who goes and grabs a rooster to try and get the basilisk 'offed' or on his side. (He is briefly seeing trying to battle with his will his way towards the infirmary, where Lily sees him...but it's too late and off he goes)

In the end Diary-mort goes back to Narcissa, and Narcissa uses Imperius on Macmillan to have him complete the job in safety. The rest is merely linear of course just as long as you consider in place of Hermione a polyjuiced into Hermione Narcissa. In the end, the two swap position during the 'capture' of Hermione, (Where Lucius comes to visit Hogwarts with 'Narcissa' under Imperius. Couple of charms and the Aurors stationed look the other way) and in the end...all is well that which ends well!

During Christmas, Narcissa gifts the Marauder map to Harry for some reason.

Pretty simple wasn't it?

Now however more questions pop up of course: Who supplied at least a year of polyjuice to Narcissa and did the same to the 'Hermione' counterpart? Why would Narcissa give the marauder map to Harry?

Anyway, for more clarifications, feel free to ask through pm/review.

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 5

There was little he could do but stare deep into the eyes of the upcoming committee of wizards. One of them was wearing billowing green robes and appeared to hold his face sternly. His father was sourly looking at the green robed man, while Lillian seemed to be spotting tears streaking down her cheeks as Lily tried to console her as best as she could.

"Minister, are you really sure..." James Potter tried once more to speak, his voice mournful.

"The noble members of the Wizengamot have voted, Lord Potter," the magical minister replied curtly. "It is in the best interests for Miss. Granger to remain imprisoned for life. There will be no changing the sentence. Even visits should normally not be permitted. I am stretching the boundaries of the law as it stands: I hope you understand as much." The voice was mellifluous as the group took the stairs to go upwards.

"She's innocent you..." Heinrich could hear Lillian's voice come through the stairs as the group climbed upwards, while he and Gellert waited with bated breath for them to pass. Luckily they hadn't been in their direct path, and even more luckily they had gone upwards while their target was downwards.

He still remembered Gellert's display of Azkaban's floor map. It was triangular shaped and much like Nurmengard required one to walk from one long corridor to another before reaching a flight of stair to get down a level. However differently from Nurmengard, there was also a smaller tunnel that went from the executioner's chamber all the way upwards towards the sky. It had been a small act of mercy: those condemned to the kiss could see the sky one last time before being killed.

There were grates all along the tunnel, and of course all that one could see was but a small slim piece of blue, but apparently it was enough for many to simply surrender without fault to the Dementor's kiss. It was a bit of a sad history, but it went to great lengths to show just how dehumanizing the prison was if all it took was a sliver of blue to calm the prisoners sent to their death.

Slowly, Gellert stopped pinning him to the wall and gestured for him to follow. Since the wizard did not cast the spell again neither did he. The two walked downwards slowly, Gellert taking the point as of the two he was the one who'd have taken care of heavy lifting. Technically Heinrich was there only to deliver the blood and pronounce the incantation. Nothing else was required of him, yet at the same time he was beginning to wonder if he should unclasp the invisible cloak and let the invisibility one go above and beyond.

No. Not just the Invisibility cloak. The Cloak of the Deathly Hallows themselves. He had never thought much about it, but when you end up spending a month with a wizard who spent most of his life researching them, and with nothing else to do, eventually the chatting had moved to the Deathly Hallows and what they were.

One was a gem that could make the bearer able to speak to the shadows of the dead; the second was a wand more powerful than anything else, the third and final...he was wearing it on him since he had nicked it from the Weasley boy. The cloak of invisibility that could truly do what the others could only pale to compare to: it could hide the user from anything. Hiding from death was of course something he didn't wish to try, but still he knew that if push came to shove, he had a reliable plan to fall down on.

They had to descend to the deepest levels of the prison to reach the cornerstone's room, and in order to do that they had to pass through three different underground levels. Quietly, Gellert began to step through the stone corridor with his wand forward, the flickering lights barely illuminating the few small and dingy cells in which the rotten remains of wizards stood as an eerie reminder to those who walked that eventually, they were but mortals in wait for their death. Once a wizard was killed after all, what need was there to care for the body? Sure, it would breathe and its heart would pump, but there would be nothing in it, nothing at all to make it move or talk or anything.

For all aspects, the person would be dead and deceased, but the body would only ever so slowly rot away. If no family claimed them, then a few were selected to stand in the dingy and small cells, and act as a grim reminder to those who would soon come and join them in their death: there was no escape from Azkaban after all. Or at least, that was how the story went. How it truly would go from that

moment onwards, Heinrich didn't know...but he was writing history, in that precise moment he was walking together with history and writing upon it.

The first evasion from Azkaban would hold Hermione's and Hagrid's names, and with the people distracted they wouldn't even realize it, but they'd lose their wards to him. Azkaban would be his by the end of the day. The simple feeling of power entered his body like a curse as he felt giddy. The fortress would be his, the power of the Dementors at his disposal. He would...no. He would do nothing for the moment. First he had to actually do it, and only then he would hold his dreams of glory and world conquest.

Few steps more that resounded all the more noisily in the silence of the long corridor filled with rot and the decay of the bodies, and Heinrich found himself muttering a question in a low whisper.

"Why isn't there any stench in the air?"

Gellert grumbled a single word back. "Inferi."

Heinrich eyes widened as he once more gave a look to the nearest corpse, who was now actually looking back at him and following him with his gaze. The body was half-rotten, bits and pieces of bones emerging from various spots in his sickly green skin and yet his eyes looked at him, with a fierce reddish hue that seemed to show all the malevolence and anger that he could never comprehend in a lifetime. Why would anyone hate the world so much that it would show in the eyes, red or crimson that they were, and still deeply loathe him as he walked through? He didn't know. Maybe they were made to be that way, but weren't Inferi souls trapped in the bodies of the dead to begin with?

"We're near the first block," Gellert whispered as he carefully added, "Keep the notice-me-not charms up Heinrich. You don't want the prisoners to see or notice us." The old wizard murmured.

He nodded back to the man, concentrating once more as he slowly began to move his wand gently around himself. He didn't trust everything to be smooth, so it was better to be already prepared in case he'd need quick reflexes. The squeaking sound of a mouse caught his attention for a second, but he dropped it as soon as he realized that the rat in question was scurrying his way back towards

the exit. He didn't question it, as he was too busy looking forward, trying to avoid staring into the cells of the condemned to death.

"Yer been a good dad, ye know I know." A burly voice caught his attention, and that was what made him still and whip his head to the side quickly. Rubeus Hagrid stood in a cell that could barely contain him, even when the half-giant was crouched down and as small as possible. His beard looked shaggy and grown, and he clearly did seem to have famished in the place. He had been there since Christmas practically, that would have meant what? Seven months? Had he been left to literally die alone in there?

"Yer been good, I swear tis true." The half-giant added to no-one in particular, "Ye had a kind heart ye had. Could've lef' me wit' da giants, they'd have killed me in a blink but ye were a kind dad, ye always were." The groundskeeper of Hogwarts was practically whimpering in his cell.

"Heinrich." Gellert hissed slowly, looking at him. "What is it? Oh wait." The old wizard moved slowly back towards the half-giant, and then cussed in some sort of Germanic language. "Damn it." Grindelwald finally muttered. "All right. I had a contingency for this." From his inner pocket he unzipped a small pin, one of those used to normally hold baby napkins together, one of those nursery ones.

"Listen Heinrich," the old wizard added, "When you get the wards, you'll have to lower the ones against portkeys in the death rows understood? Otherwise it won't work." Quietly, the wizard levitated the pin and pinched it inside the beard of the giant. He wouldn't feel it and it would still count as body part, then he turned and bit his tongue.

"What's he doing in the death rows?" Heinrich hissed in a low voice, as he frantically looked around, "Wasn't the sentence meant for life?"

"Yes, that's why I don't like this." Gellert commented, "Keep an eye out for the cells then, but...be prepared for the worse. They might have gotten the Granger girl before us." Those words said, they both began to walk again towards the end of the corridor, where a thick leather covered door stood.

The skin of its wood was a strangely sickening yellow tint, the same color as pus, while the leather seemed to be bubbling up as if sores had just then appeared for their presence. He didn't discard this to be some sort of trap to keep out the wrong guys, namely them, but he was surprised when Gellert strode confidently forward. His wand moved in zig-zag patterns and with systematic precision, and with each movement the door's skin covering seemed a little less prone to explode. With a final flourish, the door unlocked and sprung open with a soft clank.

Heinrich looked back nervously, glad that the few prisoners near the door hadn't even taken time to worry about them.

"Desparo. Now. Follow me quick." The order came and Heinrich concentrated once more. Grabbed by undead hands and carried deep in a gurgling maelstrom at sea, being eaten alive from the legs upwards with no chance of escape. Screaming until his voice went sore as his only help left him. The clouds started to pour down rain as darkness reached for him to hold him at her breast and never let him go, to crush and asphyxiate him to her depths. As despair clawed within his soul and his appearance morphed ever so slightly, he could see Gellert dashing forward the corridor, his own dark fog-like semblance making him look like a Dementor flying quickly.

The reason was apparent at the end. A man was standing halfway through the corridor, carrying what seemed to be a man forward. The man itself was dingy looking and quite frail, he was severely malnourished and appeared to be crying hysterically.

"I didn't do it. I didn't do it. I didn't do it. Please no. Please mistake was. Please. Please. Me not...Me not did...I didn't...I didn't do it." The weak whining of the man soon turned into a pour screeched of fear as Gellert moved closer and closer still. Was he going to smack against the other guard or what? Heinrich followed as fast as he could, and it was that he realized that the cells around them didn't hold only corpses rotting away, but also breathing people shackled to the walls, wailing and screaming in agony as foul retched Dementors stood nearby, hovering close, ever so close...but not giving the kiss. No, just hovering.

Just hovering and doing nothing more, as if the screaming humans were nothing more than a television program to watch and enjoy a little at a time. He felt sick...was this the place where the Dementors

ate? Was this their...canteen? The screams, the shivers down his spine and the despair that carved a deep niche within him.

It was ironic, but the sheer presence of a Dementor merely intensified the spell itself, yet a single fleeting moment of hope destroyed it. That was when the blood curling shriek of the guard caught his ears, Gellert had merely dashed straight through them and the guard had shoved aside the prisoner, letting him hit the ground. Heinrich didn't stop to look back at them, he just ran and ran and hoped that among the screaming men and women Hermione wasn't there. He didn't feel much for the girl, but he knew what it meant to be falsely accused, and this fate, this torture...he wouldn't give it to his worst enemy.

"Bloody bastards! You..." The guard of course was pissed, and Heinrich heard her all the way till the end of the second corridor, were as soon as he reached he realized the door wasn't actually a door. It was just a ramp of stairs going down, a mere ramp that seemed to hold no stairs however. Gellert simply jumped down, hovering as if he had been born to fake being a Dementor, and Heinrich couldn't help but follow, hoping desperately that his intent was enough to cast a silent Leviosa. The adrenaline of the run mixed with the sheer willpower to plead for his success apparently moved his wand to compliance, and he found himself floating downwards the seemingly smooth ramp of stone on the trail of Gellert's own black foggy tail.

"Go right." He heard the growling distorted sound of Gellert's own voice coming ahead of him, and he complied immediately, albeit it resulted in him impacting against the stone side of the stairs at first, before actually passing through the archway right behind Gellert. The staircase apparently could have kept going down, but he didn't wonder on what could be hidden even more down below. All that he cared for at the present was getting out of this thick oily darkness that surrounded them like a blanket.

It had to be magical. There was no other explanation of why he could not see what was ahead of him, but could easily see the light coming from the stair-less, strangely nausea inducing, ramp of stairs he had left behind. The sensation of disquiet soon morphed into uneasiness, and then in nausea as he realized that he wasn't hearing Gellert any longer around him. He couldn't see right from left and not even his hands came into view when he lifted them to him.

Maybe he could try and remove the Desparo spell, maybe he could try and hope and...

"Don't." The gruff voice of Gellert reached him. "Don't move." It added slowly, and so Heinrich did not move. He stood still, holding on firmly to his belief that nobody would come and save them, that everything would remain as always unchanging, that he would be feasted alive by a horde of carnivorous subaqueous zombies in the midst of a maelstrom while slowly drowning...and in the midst of that, light finally came into view and...and he had to plead himself not to stare.

There was but a single wider hallway they were standing in. A set of doors, four in number, stood in front of them without any sign to recognize what they could mean. A bunch of figures stood in a giant cage placed in one side of the hallway, all blearily looking in their direction and whimpering, probably having thought of them their executioners.

"Check the doors." Gellert muttered while pointing with a gesture of the head as the old wizard instead moved towards the giant cage. Probably the man was looking for Hermione for him? He gulped down nervously as he hovered towards the first door, and cautiously clicked it open. A Dementor was feasting upon the trembling and convulsing form of an old uncouth man who was being devoured and deprived of his soul. It didn't look like a kiss to Heinrich. It looked more like a veritable butchering. He closed the door quickly, and moved to the second one.

In this the Dementor was hovering peacefully, the body of an already feasted upon woman standing there, her mouth open and a dribble of drool falling down her chin. He repressed the need to retch as the Dementor in question looked at him, looked towards him and appeared curious. He couldn't see him now, could he? But maybe he could see the door having opened and no-one having entered it. If he did...

"I can have another?" The Dementor asked. Carefully moving closer, "I can?" The shriek was a shriek but...but somewhere, deep down, Heinrich felt something tug and pull and move and twirl as he realized that the same tone the Dementor was using...was the same tone of Heather when she wanted a rat, or of Sophie when she was hungry, or the same whimpering sound of Fluffy who still wanted

more. It was the 'Oliver Twist' sound of 'please can I have more', and this sound...this sound made the thing inside of him snap and growl out in his voice.

"Not yet. Not yet. Hold. I will come with more. I promise." His voice came out as a shrieking sound, halfway lament and halfway painful, halfway curse to the sky and halfway promise to hell and beyond. The Dementor nodded slowly with its head, and then wistfully began to move the corpse in a corner. Wistfully. He had just used the word wistfully for a Dementor. He closed the door quickly and moved on to the third one, hoping to find Hermione and...

And he found her, yet she wasn't alone. Three Dementors hovered near while a fourth conversed with a man wielding an axe.

"It is not proper." The Dementor said with his voice grave. "This makes it painful. Not a good feast."

"You know the rules, scum." The axe bearing man spoke, "They asked me to make it like this." His axe was moving towards Hermione's right hand. "They wanted her to never be able to wield a wand again, even in death."

"Pain does not make good feast. Relaxation does." The Dementor countered.

And in that moment, Heinrich left the spoken words to Salazar Slytherin.

"MOLEO!" His wand rose in front of him as a gnashing sound filled the room, while twin rotating ethereal spheres launched themselves forward from his wand, pushing and flying through the room as they connected with the right side of the guard in question. The spheres kept on moving around, literally grinding themselves deep within the side of the wizard in question who screamed in pain as he fell on the ground, his axe clattering near him while his left hand went for a wand, but Heinrich was faster.

"TRUDO!" The next instant, all the bitter anger at the situation surged forward as crooked looking lances that seemed filled with bloodlust flew in the air with a speed he could have rarely seen. They impacted against the man, completely impaling the Azkaban guard to the floor as the various lances hit far more than mere vital

spots. Wickedly pouring themselves in hands and feet and knees, they made sure that the last breaths of the man in question would be painful, as painful as he could make it so.

Then, of course, he found himself staring at the four Dementors who were looking at him with interest.

"You spoiled him, brethren." The Dementor 'chief' spoke, "Why did you do so?" It asked, looking at him with interest. He was speaking with a Dementor, and yet the voice didn't feel like a sharp shriek or a loud wail, it seemed...human? Could such a figure hold humanity within it? How were Dementors born to begin with, after all? Some said they were mutations of Lethifolds, but...

"I...I'm here for the girl." He wailed back, and was met with a nod. A nod of acknowledgement, something he could not understand. Why were they acknowledging him like that? Why weren't they... Why weren't they fighting back?

"Then take her." The Dementor replied, "But know that none of our prisoners may leave Azkaban alive, young one." Oh so now he got it. The Dementor 'Chief' thought he was a young recently birthed Dementor. Maybe he could play it off and wait till he got to the cornerstone, and from there...hope blossomed in him again, and this time he cringed as the Desparo spell came loose.

Silence. There was silence in the room as four Dementors watched the fifth stand still and yet as they watched they couldn't help but hover a bit closer.

"We have no eyes to see, young one. Human wizards do, however. I suggest you hurry." And it was then that Heinrich realized he was still covered by some sort of hazy fog, but this one, this one came from the very tip of his wand. What...what had Ollivander said about it? Shroud...Shroud of a Dementor? Was this...was this what it meant...the...he moved, as fast as he could and not trusting his wand to keep supplying this sort of 'shroud' for long. Quickly, he latched onto the belts that apparently were holding the girl tied to it, and then unbuckled them. The moment he was done, the shivering girl literally fell on the ground, trying to crawl away.

"Why are you letting me go?" He asked, as he grabbed the girl with his left hand. The whimpering cries she made as he held her closer

made his heart cringe, but he had to carry her out after all. He was glad for all that running Gellert had made him do. At least he could easily do so.

"You will fail youngling, just like others who still hold to their humanity do. In the end you will consume yourself with grief. Worry not, no-one is a judge here...we have already been judged and found lacking after all by the gods themselves, what else is there to insist upon?"

He bit back the next question. It was of no use to actually ask more when his purpose was to leave. As he did leave the room, he realized he had closed it behind them and none had made a move to open it. After all wasn't it strange for a young Dementor to do this? Then again he had no idea how the people acted around there, and at the present he was holding a sniffing young girl who was probably still awake out of adrenaline.

"There you are." Gellert whispered, hovering towards them still 'dressed' in Dementor clothes. Hermione's whimpers grew, as the old wizard looked over the girl and then commented. "Did something happen?"

Heinrich blinked. The rooms...they were probably soundproof. The door had probably closed behind him when he had entered, and as such...he still did nod, but then whispered back.

"Nothing important." He added carefully, as a squeak sound came to his ears again.

"Rat." Hermione whispered, "Rat." She added as the small mouse, hadn't he seen it before? Came crawling out of a corner and towards the girl. She apparently held enough spirits to grab a hold of the pet, before murmuring once more. "Rat."

"Strange pet. Don't want to know." Gellert commented flicking a pin at him, looking sharply at the other side of the hallway, where apparently nothing stood in sight. "We have to go that way." He supplied, hovering away from Hermione who took a deep gasp of relief. Gellert was probably having fun with the 'hover' and Dementor costume, albeit both were actually spells and to be used for different situation. The Desparo had been meant to mimic Dementors aura in battle, to scare away troops of weak willed individuals, and the

Leviosa charm...well, it was meant to fly, not get people to mimic Dementors even better.

Heinrich followed after having secured the pin to Hermione's hair. The girl didn't seem at all fazed by that, instead holding tightly onto her rat as her life depended on it. Probably it had been her only form of friendship in this hell, and because of that...because of that she had attached herself to it.

He would probably have to tell Machiavelli not to eat the rat at Durmstrang...if his owl was still alive. He doubted his Hybridized pigeon-chicken-parrot-owl had enough brain cells to survive alone, but he could still hope. There was probably Fluffy with him keeping him company after all, and if not, then...maybe Sophie would have apparated there once or twice. Probably to keep an eye out on things...and make sure the hybrid poultry didn't try to fight his way against a bear or something like that. He slightly smiled at the tender thought, the probable lack of Dementors nearby and the fact that they were at the end of it seemed to lift his spirits after all.

Gellert was soon tapping with his wand a set of intricate patterns on the seemingly white wall, and yet as he did that Heinrich couldn't help but realize that small glittering runes were appearing one after the other. For how long had the man prepared for this? Was this smoothly done operation the result of all of his planning? Was this the result of the great mind that was one of the first Dark Lords to nearly conquer the world? In the end over fifty runes lit themselves along a pattern on the wall, and with a hiss, Gellert whispered.

"Come here Heinrich. Move it and bring forth your blood." At those words, he gulped down nervously before moving closer to the pattern, hearing only the words that Grindelwald whispered to him, "Now put your hand against the wall and recite together with me."

"I seek my rightful throne."

A loud set of clacks began to echo throughout the hallway, as Hermione appeared to be letting out a startled whining sound before collapsing on the ground.

"I seek my scepter and my orb."

The sound grew in intensity, how could the other guards not hear it? How could they not hear the whirring noise of mechanisms moving and interlocking, or the sound of magic working its miracles? Were they blind?

"I seek my mark on the wall."

And then the walls parted as magic washed over him, letting his eyes see a small dingy room with a slightly out of bounds stone of pure white marble. Etched upon its surfaces in red crimson bloods were wards of such might and power he felt his legs wobble, and yet he could not stop walking forward, for they called to him and to his blood, and he called to them and to their power. Alluring, powerful, ready to be at his command with but a touch...

And as his fingers touched on the surface, blood flew out from his very pores as his name was asked...but what was his name after all?

The name, his name...Was he Harry Dursley, Doe, Potter, Scamander, Grindelwald, Slytherin, Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff? Was he any of those names in the end? He was Harry, Heinrich or maybe even Salazar reborn? But did it matter what name he signed himself with?

Of course it did not...and so he wrote that which defined him the most.

He was King.

The feeling ceased, and he breathed in slowly before exhaling out. He could feel every step he took on the castle's floor as his own, and he could sense all those that walked upon it, and yet the question remained...what to do? He could crush them, could he not? He could kill them, could he not? Wasn't the minister in the fortress itself? Wasn't he...oh, so he was going downwards slowly, hesitantly, holding back his 'family' from reaching them...he could feel it, he could feel the Dementors stirring around the castle, the Wards updating them, telling them who was their ruler, their leader, their chief. Yet he knew he had not come here to conquer this castle.

He had come here to subtly get what he needed and then disappear.

So he turned around, ready to leave, and the wards obeyed him even without him speaking it out loud. It was but a thought and the Dementors flocked out of the death rows, flocked out to stall and gather time. Yet he felt it, he felt those creatures wonder if reckoning was at hand and yet he stalled them again, not yet, he thought, not yet.

He neared Gellert and the fallen Hermione, and as he looked into them both he merely nodded once, quietly. The next moment, Gellert snapped his fingers and the portkeys began their pulling out. The sensation passed strangely, as he fell on the ground harshly and began to spasm.

It was like awakening to a cold freezing bath in the water. The lack of all that magic, the lack of all that power running through him as he commanded a fortress of veritable magic and power...he felt so devoid after it that he just, he just thought about going back. Yet he knew he couldn't and began to breathe uneasily, as he tried to calm himself.

Next to him he could see the surprised and shocked face of Hagrid looking around with a mixture of wonder and worry, while Hermione was frightened out of her wits, holding her pet rat tightly to herself as an anchor of safety of sorts. Of all the animals she could choose, she had to go with a rat. Of course it wasn't as if Azkaban had a selection of animals, but the very least he had hoped for would be a sea-gull, if really he had to be nitpicky about it.

No, in truth he wasn't nitpicky. He was cranky. He was feeling the lack of all that delicious feeling of might and power. It had been so powerful, so...so wonderful to have the possibility to squash like bugs those insignificant...and he had stilled his own hand, and for that, right about then, he took a deep breath of relief.

"Good. Perfect plan. Perfect execution. Nine out of ten because you lack originality however." Gellert commented, "But why go with something that doesn't work after all?"

"Wer...Wer am I?" Hagrid asked, carefully looking around while catching his breath. The burly half giant had been in the prisons of Azkaban for far more time than Hermione, and yet out of the two he was the one who seemed the less affected. Probably had to do with the Giant blood or something like that.

"You're safe Hagrid." Heinrich replied slowly, "I...I got you out."

Hagrid blinked, before narrowing his eyes for a moment as he looked over him to try and get a hang of precisely who was the one that had saved them probably. After a few seconds, he finally guessed.

"Harry?"

"I'm Heinrich now. Heinrich Grindelwald to be more precise." He replied quietly, trying a little smile.

"Oh 'Arry yer a life savi...wait. Yah said Grindelwald?" Hagrid muttered, "Now wher' did I hear 'bout that..."

"Gellert Grindelwald." Hermione droned out slowly, "Really Harry?" The young girl piped in, chuckling while shaking her head, "Really. Really, really, really. You're real right?" She finally asked.

"Oh right! The bad guy Dumbledore defe...oh shmuck...ya going ta kill us?" This time Hagrid's voice was filled with a bit of regret, "I mean, it's not like..."

"No Hagrid," Heinrich replied quietly, "I got you out because you were burned by Dumbledore...He used you and left you in the prison."

"But he's Dumbledore!" Hagrid exclaimed, before suddenly lacking in breath and falling down straight on the ground anting, "And he's...well...he's good!"

"Hagrid?"

"I think they both should rest." Gellert commented nicely, "I do think I have an extra-large room for Hagrid, they can wash later on I suppose." The old wizard suggested kindly.

"If this is a dream, I don't want to wake up." Hermione whispered as she slowly wobbled on her leg. "Let's go Ratman," Hermione added, holding her rat close, "Let's find a room all right?"

The rat squeaked in reply, and Heinrich sighed as he showed the way to the girl, who was apparently coping with it in her own way. A strange one, but a way nonetheless...still, even if he no longer had the power of the fortress coursing through his veins, he felt giddy all the same.

He had done the right thing after all.

He had done the good thing.

Author's notes

The guy with the axe is the Death Eater with the axe of the canon book the prisoner of Azkaban. Found it fitting to get him killed instead of Buckbeak. That said, there is always an aftermath for these events. Like Heinrich realizing he just killed a man this time around, or you know, finding out he speaks the same language as Dementors and things like that. (Oh and the Potter Family's friendly prison visit! That one's in the next chapter)

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 6

He knocked on the door silently. The sound of the knocks echoed through the empty hallway as Heinrich waited for an answer to come. He hadn't thought much about what had happened the night before, too tired to process everything and too giddy for having succeeded to actually care. Yet here he now was, having succeeded and bringing thus food to the survivors of the ordeal. He had left Gellert to speak with Hagrid, since while he didn't doubt the fact he could drive the point across too, he'd rather talk with the girl and get her settled in.

It was kind of a shock moving from one prison to another after all. Yet it wasn't as if this prison was actually one to begin with. Well, it had been one, but now it was one no longer. Heinrich sighed as the door slowly creaked open, and the pale skinned girl with a clear and severe case of starvation showed her face. He brought up the small tray he held within his hands and whispered.

"Food?"

The girl opened the door a bit more, biting her lower lip as if she was conflicted over it. It was just food after all, what was there to worry about? That he had laced it with something? Heinrich pushed the tray forward and the girl grabbed it quickly, probably also licking her lips in the meantime. It was nothing grand of course, but after Azkaban even a cracker would look like some sort of prize from heaven. He just hoped they had gotten to both of them in time to avoid lasting damage.

"Thanks." Hermione replied quietly, just standing at the door and staring at him with a worried expression. It was a moment, Heinrich could see the flicker of an inner battle being fought within the confines of the girl's mind, before it finally broke through and the question was asked.

"Why?"

"It was the right thing to do." He murmured back, "You should rest now. We'll...We'll speak later on, when you're better." Heinrich commented, "It will take some time to get you back on your feet. If

you're still hungry just ask: I'll be by the kitchen, down the hallway." He gestured to the end of the corridor, pointing in the direction of the kitchen, "You're not a prisoner." He added that with an afterthought. He hadn't expected that those simple words would make the girl start to sob and nod meekly, before turning around to drop the tray on the desk of her room.

Then the girl turned around and hugged him, tightly.

"Thank you." She whispered, before slowly letting go of the embrace and disappearing within the room, the door closed behind her. Heinrich took a deep breath, and then moved towards the kitchen. His thoughts began to linger on the feeling of...weakness that the girl had practically radiated, and the fact that while holding her he hadn't thought much on what to do.

No, while holding the girl, he had just thought about which curses could kill her easily in the blink of an eye. He shivered as he sat down at the kitchen's counter, looking into his hands that were apparently trembling from something. Was it fright? Was he afraid of becoming a monster of his own? What had he done? The right thing? The Good Thing? What if he had fallen for the same ideals of Greater Good that Dumbledore spewed out? He had killed a man, hadn't he?

The thought made him sick as he lurched for the kitchen's bin to retch in. The smell of rotten peeled skin, the coppery scent of blood, the metallic taste in the back of his mouth all came back to him with a terrifying backslash that left him to wobble with his hands on the floor. He had killed a man, and in that moment, in that precise moment it hadn't been Heinrich Grindelwald to take the kill. It had been Salazar Slytherin.

Was the man really a part of him? Was he really his reincarnation? What if he was then, and what if he wasn't? Had he finally gone mad, that he had to separate his self in two? Had he really a second personality that came out when death was needed? He coughed out the few remains of vomit from his mouth, slowly bringing his right hand up to the counter to lift him up, to grab a glass of water and wash the bitter taste out. He looked at the windows of the kitchen, so wide and crystal clear, showing a beautiful horizon that was slowly morphing into a beautiful day.

How sick it was, that murderers could still look at those wonders of nature and feel relieved. How sick that such a blue sky could be shared between good and evil, between monsters and saints. How utterly repulsing and disgusting was it, that he dared stand beneath such a piece of art that was the rising of the sun. Yet he stood there, because no god would come down to remove him from his spot. Yet he stood there, because he had earned his right hadn't he? He could have died just like that axe guy could have, and yet...

Yet he hadn't, and the man had. He chuckled. He laughed. He banged his head against the window panel he had walked forward to without even realizing it. He was stronger than most. He was better than most...but was he the best? No.

Not yet, anyway.

Lillian Potter

She hated to use her fame. She hated to be photographed around as the Girl-Who-Lived and be forced to sign autographs and smile to the press. She hated to be used as a way to earn votes for a re-election of the Prime Minister of the wizardry world, Cornelius Fudge. Still, this was a way to at least enter Azkaban and see Hermione. She had to hear it from her friend after all, maybe...maybe there was something they had overlooked, and with the minister present then she could have her grace stamped out.

The feeling of dread within the cold humid walls of Azkaban didn't make her feel any better. She didn't know when she had begun to cry, she didn't know when all her happiness had left her, but she knew that this feeling had lasted up until her father's Patronus, a bright silver stag, had departed from the tip of his wand to clear the hallway. The remaining Dementors had rushed away, disappearing and leaving the group able to continue.

There was a small contingent of Aurors following them. This was mostly filed under a 'visit' to the prisoners of Azkaban, that the minister had to perform once per term to see if he had any graces to hand out. If Hermione was graced, then she'd be out and free...and that was what she hoped for. Still, she could do nothing for Hagrid, and that thought in particular weighted down on her conscience. What if they saw him, and yet could do nothing? Hagrid's fault had been to endanger the students with his Acromantulas, and it had

been shown that poor Macmillan had been eaten by one of such beasts.

She couldn't help but cringe as they took the steps upwards, to reach the higher up levels which were by contrast the milder ones to the Dementor's presence. They were stopped midway however, as one of the guards of the prison walked towards them.

"We weren't expecting ye so soon Guv'!" The man spoke gutturally, "They're still prepping up the girl."

"Mulciber." Her father spoke with a tightly controlled anger, "What are you doing here?"

"Oh my, you know each other?" Cornelius said pleasantly, the fact that he did so without an oily tone could only mean that the man was indeed with his head among the clouds, if he couldn't realize the amount of anger her father seemed to be radiating.

"Fought on the wrong side, the Imperius was bad." Mulciber replied with a small smirk, "Avery just went ta get the girl and make her presentable."

Lillian let out a startled cry of surprise when her father launched himself forward to grab the man by the ruff of the neck while letting out an angry hiss.

"You better not be playing games Mulciber, I still remember Diagon Alley."

"Wouldn't dream of it...twas the Imperius...I'm so sorry it happened, old pal." The snickering tone of the man was anything but truly pleading for forgiveness, and yet as the aurors separated the two of them while Fudge went on about how true gentlemen should behave, she couldn't help but worry for Hermione. Had...had they done anything to her friend? She clenched her fists as her hand went slowly towards her wand. If anything happened...

"Gentlemen, please behave." Cornelius snapped as the Aurors finished separating the two. "It is unbecoming. Now do shake hands and..."

"She's gone!" Another guard yelled from the other side of the hallway, "They've taken her out of the cell!"

"What?" She murmured, and just then, chaos ensued.

More than one voice spoke at the same time, with her father brandishing his wand in the face of 'Mulciber' while the minister was becoming purple from an effort to make everyone calm down. It didn't take long for the aurors to finally bring the calm back, but by then...by then she was already been held tightly by her mother.

"This is preposterous!" Cornelius exclaimed, "There is no way out of Azkaban!"

"She's been moved sir," an Auror piped in, having descended the stairs to probably ask someone. "Dementors moved her in the execution block, she's..."

"What!?" The blood curling scream made everyone wince, and it was only after their eyes turned to her that she realized just who had screamed. She had. She had screamed her disbelief and her anger outright, her entire frame trembling, "No!" She screamed, trying to run but being held firmly by her mother. "NO!"

"It will take some time to get down." Another Auror whispered, "Minister?"

"This is all so much improper: really, I can't begin to fathom who would have done such a thing..." Cornelius spoke clearly embarrassed, "But I will find out and I will have his head, of course it's sad that we might not be in time to..."

"Let's go instead of talking!" Lillian yelled, only to be stopped by her mother.

"Lillian. Stop." Lily whispered, "It's no use."

"But she's...Hermione's innocent!"

"We wouldn't reach her in time, Lillian." Lily whispered, "It takes at least an hour to bring down someone to the execution chambers...and there are a lot of doors to pass that are secured and..."

"No." Lillian whimpered, shaking her head. "No, no. No." She sobbed, clutching tightly against her mother's chest as she cried her tears.

"Mulciber?" She could hear her father's voice behind her, "If I find out you..."

"I would never!" The other man repeated, with that mocking tone always there. "Suppose the visits are over then Minister?"

"Yes they are." Cornelius tightly said. "Let's go Lord Potter. I am very much saddened by..."

"Minister: don't expect my vote of confidence." Her father muttered back to the man, before turning to march out of the place. The only problem was the sudden pool of dread that increased in intensity, as if a veritable stampede of pure eldritch horrors were barging their way upwards, in their directions. The reaction time of the Aurors came just close, but it still managed to pin to the ground all the important people, herself and her mother included as a true storm of Dementors flew in the air.

Their screeching sounds and noises echoed those of the most horrid nightmares, in a land twisted of flesh and death she felt nothing but sheer fear and sadness as her hands clenched against the strong stone surface of Azkaban's floor. Yet she did not move, she could not actually, because the Auror pinning them down had yet to release them, and as the thick blanket of despair fell upon them, the Dementors suddenly vanished from the corridor.

Nobody said a single word, as the fright and the fear were too much. She felt the familiar hands of her mother pulling her up and tightly hugging her as if her life depended on it, soon joined by her father who fussed over them. She gave a small look behind and gasped.

There, standing still with drool coming down his mouth, stood the kissed body of Mulciber himself. He, differently from them, had been too slow.

Heinrich Grindelwald

Parry, block, counter. Had it been a sword-fight, those moves would have been his. No lights, no loud pronunciations. No 'Verdimilious duo' or 'trio' or whatever. No long enchanted Latin incantations. No crackling powers of utter destruction. Lights of sickening dark shades flung themselves from one side to the other, in a battle that tore apart an entire forest. He grabbed the hand and smashed the bone; his opponent flung the dagger and pierced his heart. The heart was mended as he took a step back.

The battle raged as the thunder struck down. Fire, earth, wind and water were mere elements. Transfiguration was at the tip of his mouth as creatures appeared from the mere cracking ground, morphed to be nightmares of the abyss itself. Snakes with strong muscles and hardened scales, just a step away from dragons themselves, launched with fangs glistening with the most horrendous of poisons. Yet the man kept on fighting.

Why couldn't he just see?

"Salazar!" That sword of his, stolen from the goblins, just like his armor taken away from its rightful owner. Thief once and twice and thrice, of sword and shield and blood...and yet there he stood roaring among the forces of the light, while here he stood.

"Godric!" He roared back. Hell itself would answer his call: wands were unneeded instruments of his will after all. Battered shields clunk against blood soaked weapons, as the two of them took their breath, their armies clashed once more. A battle of attrition, a battle of power, a battle of belief. Fire met fire and sword met sword, axe splintered head and fist tore throat. Blood pooled and rain poured, as his eyes settled on his opponent once more. One final clash, one final pull...he would win, he knew that much. He could not lose.

It was all in the intent, after all.

Heinrich woke up with a startled cry, his sheet soaked in sweat as he gasped for air. He gathered his bearings as his glasses slid on his face, the walls of his room in Nurmengard now something so common for him to see. Yet he couldn't help but feel the pain on his back, as if an arrow had pierced him and was now sticking out through his chest. He touched himself to make sure it was all but part of a dream, and he realized he was still in one piece.

He was still intact, still whole...still a murderer. He hastily got up from his bed and dressed. It wouldn't do to sleep long. It wouldn't do to keep the others waiting. Normally he would have already woken up with a chilly bucket of water dumped on his face, but today nothing of the sort would happen. Today was August the thirteenth, and this was the day they left for Durmstrang.

The school began its lessons earlier, on the twentieth of August. Something to do with acclimatizing the students before the true cold hit in, but they had to depart a week earlier for another reason. They had to get new wands for both Hermione and...and get Hagrid's own repaired. The Half-Giant had actually recovered first. Apparently he hadn't been moved into the death rows until the very day they had come to their rescue, while Hermione had instead been there for at least twenty-four hours.

Twenty-four hours in contact with all that madness, it was a wonder she had bounced back up to a minimum of normalcy. The girl still looked underfed, but at least no longer seemed to have come out of Auschwitz. Hagrid had resumed smiling. Whatever the Giant blood was made of, it certainly appeared to have some natural properties in getting people back up on their own feet. The half-giant had actually decided to go to Durmstrang too, to take a look at the animals. Since the school did have big enough grounds for far more beasts than Hogwarts, Heinrich shivered at the thought of what monsters lurked in the shadows.

Still, he got himself dressed up, before pocketing his wand within his sleeve. He had to buy something to get his wand tied to his wrist. Maybe try and get a bunch of superglue to do it? He hadn't received any gifts for his birthday, but it wasn't as if it matter anyway. He was fine with what he had: freedom. And this small outing out in a 'rustic and picturesque' village, as Gellert referred to the spot...the fact the man had smirked and grinned at those words did not make the thing any better, but it wasn't as if he had anything to fear.

He opened the door and walked briskly towards the kitchen, the few remaining moments of tiredness from the nightmare passing by him as he reached for the counter and poured a bowl of cereals. He had never wondered much on where the food came from, and knowing Grindelwald it was probably something as simple as having some villagers somewhere have a magical cabinet of sorts and filling it with food that teleported up.

That or an owl service that delivered the groceries once a week, or maybe there was still food being set-up for the possible 'guards' of the prison. Something like that was probably normal, seeing as the small inner garden of the prison couldn't possibly feed everyone. And he highly doubted there were plants that grew cereals...albeit with magic, he supposed it could be slightly possible.

A squeak got his attention and as his eyes focused down to his feet, he met with the 'Rat', the rat being the pet of Hermione who apparently had followed her dutifully from Azkaban itself. The animal was clearly intelligent and probably magical too. If only he could remember if there was any type of mouse that was magical in nature. He doubted there was a sort of 'Mickey-Mouse' variation...but he had a hybridized poultry believing himself a messenger owl, so what was the problem actually?

He nicked a piece of cheese to the mouse, who fed on it ravenously before squeaking his way out of the room. Heinrich sighed and resumed his late hour breakfast. He was glad that Gellert had gotten some time off him to concentrate on Hermione's magical theory and bring her up to speed. The girl would need it in Durmstrang. He couldn't help but start toying with the cereals, growing soggy by the minute with the milk poured inside. The mush looked so much like a splattered brain that it wasn't even funny. Where had that thought come out from to begin with? Had he ever seen a splattered brain?

Of course he had. Troll, first year, girl bathroom. He could feel that something was wrong with him, but it was nothing life threatening. It was just a bit of madness probably, nothing to worry about. He groaned in frustration. If there was one thing he still longed for, it was a visit to a supermarket's electronic department. All those new Pc models and hardware...the new games coming out with better graphics...he felt himself salivating at the thought. Yet here he was, fighting for freedom.

Just like a good little child soldier; only he had a stick as a weapon and his stick could destroy buildings with a flick of the wrist. He gave out another sigh as he slowly walked his way out of the room and down the hallway, heading for the stairs. This would be the first time for him in the outer garden of the prison. Still of course within the wards, but at the same time out of the prison's walls itself. The walls that made him actually feel safe also constricted Hagrid and

Hermione: both of them spent basically all the time they could outside, rather than inside. The tan they had proved it, of course.

He was still a sickly pale color himself, and that coloration of his skin didn't seem willing to leave. His hair had grown a bit more, and he groaned in frustration at the fact that indeed, it had been dyed blond. Just like Hermione's own had changed from the slight reddish hue to a raven black. It was better to be safe after all, than to be sorry. He took a step out of the massive doors of Nurmengard and exhaled slowly afterwards. No Aurors appeared out of the blue to capture him, so he was good: still within the wards and all.

He walked towards the outer 'garden' and there he snickered slightly to himself. Gellert was desperately trying to bring his opinion across, while at the same time Hermione was doing the exact opposite. Hagrid was nowhere in sight, so he either had already gone ahead or he had yet to come down.

"I'm saying that blood purity is crap: I mean, really? Why do you have to believe that some are inferior to others when..."

"Miss, it's the twentieth time I already told you the same words: I was young."

"That does not excuse..."

"Heinrich! Come here before Jean decides to pull out another one of her muggle scientists: we were waiting for you." Gellert's voice was warm, a small smile spreading on the old man's lips as he probably found the scene interesting to say the least. Hermione shut her mouth in a few seconds, turning around raven haired and all and puffing her cheeks out.

"Heinrich, tell him!" She exclaimed, pointing at the retired and 'in redemption' magical Hitler, "He still thinks some are better than others."

"Well...You are certainly better than a flea, are you not?" Gellert retorted.

"But those are different species!" Hermione, who was called Jean as her false name, replied hotly. "You can't compare them!"

"Why not?" Gellert insisted, "They are still living beings, right? We should all help ourselves to a nice brunch of rocks if we were to believe 'all are equal'."

"But you can't have humans treated differently: how would you feel to be a second rate citizen?" Jean replied exasperated, trying to make any sense of what the man was saying.

"You know that for centuries, slavery was commonly practiced right?" Gellert began slowly, "The Greek Polis flourished only because they could enslave other cities. The Roman Empire grew through the slaves and till well into the fifties, and I'm speaking of nineteen-fifty, it was a common thing for black men to be discriminated against. Yet somehow morality changed again. Let's make a game girl: tell me, who is worth more between a doctor and a homeless man?"

Jean bit her lip, before replying in an unsure way, "They're both lives. They're equal."

"Mistake." Gellert replied quickly, "One life is more precious than the other. Both are equally precious mind you, I am not saying the opposite...but some are more equals than others. It is in the nature of the human race to consider some superior and some inferior. You can believe all you want, and as strongly as you want that Democracy is the key to equality...but it's false. People flock to a leader: they always have and always will. That his name morphed from 'Lord', 'King', 'Emperor' to 'elected representative at the parliament' means nothing. He is still a man chosen by the mass: he is still a superior being among inferior ones. There cannot be equality."

Gellert smiled bitterly, "If anything, it's the fault of the inferior beings that they decided to select said course of action, but it's their choice you see? They decide because they are the majority, but the majority is a lie. I've lived long enough to know that a single man can change a country by sheer will. I've lived long enough to see a minority rise to power and control the sheep without fail...So you know why in truth you're fighting me over this triviality?" The old wizard said, asking the rhetoric question kindly.

"Because you're afraid I'm right. You're afraid to be a sheep in the middle of a thousand others. You're afraid that nothing you can do

will change the world and somewhere deep down you've come to accept it...but you refuse to see it for what it is. Men and women can change the world even alone, Jean. All they need is their voice and their hands; that they choose so by yelling at pubs and marching in the streets guns in hand or that they do so through long winded speeches...in the end they change the world because they wish to."

Heinrich didn't move as he could see that Jean was trying her hardest to find a fault in the old wizard's argument, but as nothing came up, he sighed and walked over the two, preparing himself for a massive headache.

"But treatment should be the same for everyone, shouldn't it? Inferior or superior beings...they both should be treated in the same way: with respect." To those words pronounced by him, Gellert smiled and nodded.

"Good of you to catch my words, Heinrich. Even the slaves in Rome were treated far better than how they were portrayed. Sometimes...sometimes freedom is but a hassle. If you have food, a job and a boring life, what do you do with 'freedom' if not to only get the pain of having to make your own choices?"

"Why didn't you stay in prison then," Jean muttered back, "You don't seem to like being in a cell though." She crossed her arms over her chest, raising her chin in defiance. "People should all have the same rights."

"But about their duties, girl?" Gellert replied, "Why should some people prey on the government while others work their asses off? Why should some be differently treated because of nepotism, of blood ties, or the likes?"

"But you just said people are different!" Jean exclaimed once more.

"I said that, didn't I?" Gellert chuckled, "Yet my armies held giants, vampires, werewolves and many more 'creatures' that indeed were as living and breathing as you and I, sometimes even smarter than myself. I said people can be naturally classified, Jean. I never said the criteria for it, did I? I never said if it was a matter of skin or brainpower or something like that now, right? You see." The old wizard coughed slightly, "It's but a matter of perspective."

"I'm lost." Jean whispered, as Heinrich merely smirked slightly. He had learned long ago not to talk about political views with Gellert. It was sort of the reason people like Hitler and Mussolini rose to power: they always had a way with words that made them look like they were right, even to their opponents. He refrained from entering the argument as much as he could precisely because he knew it was a lost cause.

You can't convince a one hundred and eleven years old magical Nazi to suddenly drop the swastika. Sure, you can convince him to leave the flag in the closet, but burn it? You'd be better off trying to shoot him down.

"All right, last metaphor and then we grab the portkey and go get you a wand." Gellert deadpanned, "I already sent Hagrid ahead to get a new wand and handed him over the portkey for Durmstrang so there will be no need to worry about him any longer."

Heinrich raised an eyebrow, but said nothing more. The tone was nothing less than kind, but it still smelled the sort of kind that Dumbledore of all people used. He had to remember not to completely lower his guard with the old man. He knew not to trust him with all of his secrets, like the invisible and invisibility cloak, but he knew he needed him. He needed the man to train him, to make him stronger, and he just hoped he wouldn't get an arrow in the back for doing so.

He just hoped...yet somehow, he believed that hope was not enough.

"A man who does not work should not eat." Gellert pointed out, "and he should starve to death and die." He added. "This is the moral of the famous story of the ant and the grasshopper by Aesop."

"Yes. So?"

"The Ant is superior to the grasshopper. The Grasshopper is an inferior being: he did nothing and expected the same as the one who did something."

"But didn't you just...what about the voters then? You said all those who believe in democracy are inferior, didn't you?" She snapped back at him, only for Gellert to laugh.

"No. The sheep which whine that nothing is done are inferior beings. They keep on ranting about how they voted another person who should be their representative, their equal, and when he does nothing the fault goes to him...and not to them who voted someone who was not able to do as they willed. Weak willed people elect weak willed candidates. Inferior beings are elected by inferior beings which leads us to the point where a superior being needs to gain command and control them, before they hurt themselves."

"And such a 'superior being' would be you?"

"Me? No. I'm out of bounds." Gellert snickered, "I'm in retirement. The moral of the story however is always one: difference exists for a reason. People are inherently different. Some are stronger, others are smarter, some are quicker on their feet...the point is that the strong person in an element should always lead. Not the one who has the majority of the people on their side: those who rule must be strong, not pleasant to the eye."

"But if they become tyrants then..."

"Enough for today child," Gellert said, dismissing the argument, "We'll talk later on. Let us get you a wand, and I'd be surprised if it wasn't made of babbling wood with a core of babbling draught."

The portkey was a simple rope, and after Gellert placed a warming charm over both 'Jean' and Heinrich, he activated the portkey. Once it was touched, it brought the trio of them knee deep into the snow of what seemed like a small no-named village in the middle of a blizzard. In the middle of this truly 'rustic' village a small sign stood hanging with icicles at its bottom.

"Gregorovitch has the best wands of all of Siberia." Gellert said assuredly as Heinrich groaned. Thankfully he did have the warming charm on himself, because the entire rustic feel of the village seemed more of an out of the world experience, with them being in some sort of rendition of the North Pole. The wand shop was small and dingy, similar to Ollivander and yet at the same time profoundly different. There were small candles illuminating the place, as a man stood behind the counter reading a book, his hair of a pure white color, just like his beard. He looked like Santa Claus, if only not

because of his clothes and because he doubted Santa would actually be found reading a book that appeared to be a trashy romance novel.

A trashy romance novel written in Latin, of course, but still one...the Satyricon.

"Gregorovitch, old pal!" As soon as Gellert spoke in a nice Germanic accent, the wand maker literally threw the book his way and grabbed a wand, before launching a set of curses so dark it made the hair on the back of Heinrich's neck rise as he dove for cover. The flurry of spell was interrupted after a successful one hit the wand maker in the chest, flinging the man backwards and on his knees, all energy apparently sapped from him.

"He can be a bit cranky if you interrupt his reading." Gellert said quietly, slowly making his way behind the counter. "Of course we actually need the wands, not your expertise Greg." The old wizard added, "So...stay there and be a kind host, all right? Miss. Gregorovitch, please come closer."

For a moment, nobody moved. It took a few instants for 'Jean' to realize that her surname had apparently been decided. She slowly moved forward as she half-expected Gellert to probably be like Ollivander in choosing the wand, instead all that the old wizard did was simply grab a bunch and give them to the girl to hold.

The procedure was repeated until, as a small pile of wands cluttered the floor, one in the bunch that Jean had been currently holding sparked. With a grin of satisfaction, Gellert removed a bunch of even more wands of the same type as that one, and in the end chose the one that 'sparked' the most for her.

A flick of the wrist later and the cluttered on the floor wands were back in their own boxes.

"See? I always wonder why wand makers have to make a fuss about it with 'try this' or 'try this one'...go with quantity and you can't miss the right one between all of them."

"Did you put the wands back in their proper order?" Jean suddenly asked, as she flicked her new wand right and left carefully.

"Of course not." Gellert grinned, "Let good old Greg take care of it when he wakes up...and realizes it."

"Why shouldn't he..."

"Obliviate."

Jean bit her tongue. She was probably fighting between the desire to yell at the man and the fact that she had been saved specifically because laws hadn't been followed. If she had yelled on rule breaking...wouldn't that have made her a hypocrite? Yet rules were rules, weren't they?

"Fourteen inches Hawthorn it is then, with a core of Hebridean Black heartstring." Gellert commented, before beckoning Heinrich closer. "Your turn Heinrich: you will need a second wand after all."

It felt like betrayal. He didn't want to. The wand was his and his alone, and he was its bearer and its user...and yet he knew the words were right, and another was needed...the true one was needed. Why true? Heinrich blinked at the notion that he was looking for a 'true' wand, not understanding where the thought had come from or why, but accepting yet another stack of wooden wands. The process was repeated until, in the end, a single wand came out that sparked with crimson bloody glints.

"Uhm...Now what is this wand to begin with..." Gellert mused, before looking back at Gregorovitch and shrugging. "Can't hurt to check. Legilimency!" It took a moment, and then the old wizard chuckled. "Really? They exist? The Quibbler was right on something? My...I shouldn't be surprised...the girl was a seer after all."

Heinrich raised an eyebrow in wait, looking over this second wand that appeared to be still sparking out.

"Well Heinrich, you've got yourself a thirteen inch long Hazel wood and Heliopath's tail core of a wand...and for why I'm laughing to myself, it's that Heliopaths are actually considered myth. The simple fact there's a wand here however makes me believe that someone isn't actually writing article while drunk." Gellert chuckled, "Had I known..."

"It's still sparking sir." Heinrich stated, as Gellert merely looked over the wand with curiosity.

"Indeed. That wand, my son," and this time the 'my son' was said with some sort of fatality that he did not miss, "is controlled by your emotions. Lose your temper and its fiery core will burn all around you to ashes. Harness the fire, and all will burn before you." Gellert chuckled as he finished speaking, "Truly a wand for those who have a set course...however," the old wizard whispered, "Heliopath means both 'something which feels like the sun' but also 'suffering like that of the sun'."

"Great." Heinrich muttered, "More pain coming my way."

"Without pain, there is nothing to gain." Jean whispered in a tiny voice, as she looked around the shop for a moment, before heading off to grab something from a rack. "Sorry." She added as an afterthought while looking in Gregorovitch direction. Returning to them, Jean sported in her hands two sets of wand chains, of the highest quality available: dragon leather.

"So..." Gellert snickered, "We move from being righteous to being thief-eous?"

"That word doesn't exist," the girl snapped back before handing one set over to Heinrich, who accepted it graciously, "And secondly I'm expecting you to pay him."

Gellert rolled his eyes, before dropping some Galleons on the desk of Gregorovitch.

"It's been nice making deals with you Greg! See you!" And the next moment, with a loud pop sound, the three of them disappeared. Left behind knocked unconscious and obliterated, Gregorovitch wouldn't remember a thing. Heinrich couldn't help but think if this was the right thing to do...but at least Gellert had paid the man, hadn't he?

Few seconds later, had they stayed, they would have seen the Galleons transform into pebbles.

Author's notes

Just to make sure nobody gets too comfortable with Gellert. His opinion is only his. Thus it's the opinion of a Magical Hitler who has renounced a bit of his beliefs but not all of them (General superiority still lingers, as does the belief that a single man is more powerful as a ruler than a majority).

Hermione Granger is now 'Jean Gregorovitch' and Harry Dursley is now 'Heinrich Grindelwald'...for how long, I wonder.

I think Gellert is being portrayed as I wished him to be: a sort of 'grandfather' that however was also Hitler. Think about having Hitler as the Grandfather that spoils you. You know he did some bad things in his youth (really horrible things), but he's your grandfather and he spoils you. That's the feeling of 'wrongness' that I'm trying to deliver with him, tell me if I managed.

The bit where he is more 'excited' is because he does have six years as a Ravenclaw student feigning his age and some things do linger around. For the wands, I'm actually enjoying reading the wikis on all their types and forms and how they work. It's kind of like the Jedis who need to build the lightsaber and find the cores: wand+core= specific wizard type.

That said, yes, something is amiss with the fact that Heinrich sent Hagrid first and the two kids later. What is wrong will be seen later on (probably).

Next chapter: Durmstrang! And you'll be surprised at where I put that damn place. (No really, take a guess and if you're right, I'll give you a digital cookie)

The theme for this book will be mostly centered on what is right and what is wrong, while talking of what is good and what is evil, mixing it with perspective and 'absolute evil does not exist'. The usual morality isn't set in stone thing I like to do.

Thanks for reviewing by the way! I'm glad the story is liked this much.

PS: The Satyricon was, (at least for when it was written) a parody about a guy who loved another guy who was fought over by a third guy who hated the first guy. It was a trashy, 'romantic' but ultimately a parody of the Roman times. Of course now it's just a good old piece of literature, but keep it out of the hands of kids.

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 7

The flag was hoisted and the ship began its rocking. The wind billowed the sails strongly, as the waves of the cold sea impacted against the sturdy frame of the galleon that would lead him and Jean to Durmstrang. The cold salty air hit his face repeatedly, as the bitter cold flailed his nostrils and his eyes. Covered as he was and with his trunk packed and shrunk in his inner pocket, his only worry was to hold tightly upon the side of the ship itself. Apparently, it was the test of admission.

The first years of Durmstrang stood tied to the central mast in fear and fright, as the ship rocked up and down through the mighty waves that belonged only to the fiercest of storms, and yet there they were. His mind reeled in the thought of the undead feasting upon his ankles while a maelstrom poured its watery grave upon him, and with that thought he couldn't help but hold tightly to the bulwarks. Jean wasn't fairing any better, and yet she stood right in front of him.

They both were clad in the thick dark furs that were needed for the warm months, as well as the cold ones since there was no change of clothing required. The warming charm was the first charm taught at the school, soon followed by those to avoid frostbite and to stave off scurvy. Why said charms were needed became clear the moment they set their gazes forward. An archipelago of pure ice and snow lingered at the horizon as the ship's speed increased as if to mock their efforts at holding on.

Jean's hands slipped as she fell backwards, only to be held by his own body with a small groan. The girl was still weak because of the Azkaban prison, and yet she had even gone as far as insisting on taking this admission together with him. She could have appeared directly with Gellert through the use of the issued portkey, but she had felt the need to turn a new leaf, just like him. Just like him there she stood holding against the cold and the wind, and the feeling was something impossible to describe.

Holding your own feet firmly planted as the ship moved and turned to reach the frozen bay carved within the monolithic iceberg did more than simply make you feel strong: it made you feel at the head of the world. The ship's every movement was a symphony of

creaking sounds of wood mixing with the strong smell of tar and of the sea, and yet in that precise moment, with the Ocean letting them leave its own embrace for the safety of the harbor in question, he couldn't help but long back a view to what he had left.

"Ye'r got sea eyes boy." A gruff voice grumbled from the bridge, slightly above and behind them, where the captain of the ship had stood looking out with his telescope. "Ye ever been on a ship?"

"No sir," Heinrich replied quickly, "First...time." He added.

"Ye don' look like a firstie ta me." The captain replied. "Transfer?"

"Yessir." He replied quickly, thankful that Jean had took that moment to grab hold once more of the bulwark, since the stopping of the ship happened abruptly, nearly making him tumble forward. "Third year, me and Jean here."

"Jean? Little Frenchie miss? Coming from that sissy school of 'bawdbaton'?" There was something about the word 'bawd' that made Heinrich flinch slightly. If only he could recall what it was about...

"My surname is Gregorovitch." Jean hissed back, "And you're right: it was for sissy and we left." She then spat against the wooden floor and turned around, her boots stomping furiously on the ground as she moved towards the lowered planks on the side of the ship that would lead the students ashore.

"Aye, she's got a fire in her that one." The captain aptly mused out loud, "Gregorovitch uh? Like the wand maker. Suppose you have to follow her kid."

"Yes, I suppose I should sir." Heinrich replied, starting to move towards the plans himself.

"Call me Captain boy! If ya ever want to try yer hand at a ship again, there's the Seamanship elective!" Those words filing away in his ears, Heinrich moved carefully down the plank that would lead him to the port's ice docks, and from there near Jean who was currently waiting for him next to Gellert himself. The old man had no need to conjure some sort of illusion or to use polyjuiced. He was old, and the people expected him to be in prison. Nobody would have cared

for an old man who was apparently with two recently transferred students.

He even had given them permission to use the name Basileus to call him...and the cover was that he was their private tutor from their deceased family. Heinrich couldn't after all keep the surname 'Grindelwald' in the school: it would bring forth too many questions and problems. So he had to revert to Heinrich Prince, just like Severus would have wanted to.

He kind of wondered if the man would ever contact him to begin with during the course of the school year, or if he'd rather not at all. Technically it was better this way: with no contact, there was no way of compromise. Yet he couldn't help but think that something would eventually go the wrong way, for some reason. Surprisingly, the trip to the headmaster's office was something relatively brief. The man, Igor Karkaroff, was a simpering fool who handed over to them a list to check which courses they decided to follow, with their relative hours during the week.

The core courses were:

Offensive and Defensive magic.

Charm and Transfiguration.

Herbology and Potions.

History of man and wizard.

Astronomy.

The electives on the other hand varied from Magical Creatures to Necromancy while passing through things like Seamanship and heading off towards Ancient spells. The electives stood on at least three pages, while the core courses were clearly a minority and far less in number...

"We at Durmstrang value the individual," Igor began, carefully nervous for Gellert being in the same room as him probably, "All the core courses are done in the first three days of a week, leaving the other four free to do with as many or as little electives as you like to." The probably Russian or Germanic professor began, "There is no

space for stupidity however. You are required to do at least three elective courses. In the event that more than one overlaps worry not, for there are at the very minimum two professors assigned for each course and neither do the lesson at the same time."

Heinrich eyes bulged as he looked at the list again biting his lips.

'Creation of magical artifacts' seemed so interesting...just like 'Trench warfare' and 'Battle Tactics'. He wondered if it was the fact that most if not all of the electives were centered on killing something or someone that made Durmstrang's fame as 'Dark' in the world renowned.

"Exams for the Electives can also be done after the winter vacations, to advance to the next level of the elective sooner," Igor began, "Or during the spring break...questions?"

"What about...the language issue?" Jean asked, looking uncomfortable, "Are the lesson going to be in German or Dutch or..."

"English." Igor replied without batting an eyelid.

"Wh...What?" Heinrich blurted out without controlling himself, "Not that it's a bad thing, but," hurriedly he added, "Why in English?"

"We at Durmstrang cater to the needs of many who seek discipline, stern harsh work and seek to become the best." Igor puffed out his chest as he spoke, clearly taking pride in his work. "Our curriculum is the most competitive in the world, and we hold our students' future need to their highest regards. We have students from all over the world for our famous Seamanship course and wizard police from various countries coming to do update courses in our halls concerning Tactics and Warfare and much more."

"In my times, it was 'Russian or death'," Gellert grumbled, "Tovarisch."

"Times change." Igor replied slowly, "People change."

"People never change, Karkaroff." Gellert muttered, "They just put a mask on their true face."

"Heinrich?" He was interrupted from his interest in the two older men conversation by Jean's voice. The girl was looking at him with a sort of worried expression, her eyes looking from his face to his still not checked paper. "Have you chosen already?" She too appeared to have left everything except the core courses blank.

"What do you want to do?" Heinrich asked carefully.

"Well..." She bit her lip, "There's this elective on Medi-wizard preparation..."

Heinrich nodded and checked it. "Then?"

"Mythological Creatures and Ancient Spells." Jean replied, before quickly adding, "You don't have to choose the same as..."

"We'll do a few together, so I can keep an eye out for you." Heinrich whispered carefully, "And we can compare notes too. I'll be trying out Seamanship, Tactics, Necromancy and Spell-making." At the last one, Igor strangely laughed with a bit of nervousness, while Gellert chuckled clapping his hands.

"Add Elemental spells and Ancient Runes to your electives and you'll end up doing the same school courses as I did." Heinrich nodded at that information, before checking those courses too. He bit his lip as he looked over at what Jean had been checking instead. Mostly theoretical ones like Ancient History and Arithmancy coupled with Infiltration in Muggle Society and Potion Creation.

"Each elective lasts a year usually," Igor spoke carefully, "nothing prohibits you from adding more next year if your schedule frees up." The Headmaster then cautiously grabbed the stack of papers and sighed. "I'll finish compiling these. Miss Jean Gregorovitch, Mister Heinrich Prince, let me personally welcome you to Durmstrang: Numquam oculos coniicias evertant a veritate."

"Never turn your eyes away from the truth." Gellert pointed out. "Now you'd better go together with the first years to get an idea of the school itself." The old wizard looked pointedly to Igor, who nodded. "They'll be waiting by the docks: don't lose yourself and if in trouble, ask a Praefectus or a Gubernator. The Praefectus have a silver patch with stripes on their right shoulder, while the Gubernator have golden ones on their left shoulders."

Heinrich nodded mutely, before turning to leave. He was quickly followed by Jean, and once the two of them left the Headmaster's office, they began to navigate in the opposite way the dense cluttering of tunnels dug in the mixture of stone and ice that was the castle.

The Headmaster's office overlooked the harbor and was accessible through a steep flight of stairs covered in thick ice and without any railing to speak of. The reason Durmstrang boots required nailing was made clear when the ice on the various floors was seen. The group of first years had been waiting for a while, when the two of them joined the assembled students. It was quite a number actually.

Far more than the number seen at Hogwarts, the first years were at the very least thirty or forty in numbers, and as they all crowded the entrance of the ice structure, Heinrich couldn't help but feel slightly overwhelmed. It was like entering the frozen jaws of an ice dragon after all, yet the torches that flickered within the beast's throat gave him reassurance since they were hinged upon copper rings that stood within stone walls.

"Listen up!" A female Praefectus with blond hair and a slightly 'rotund' complexion roared, "I'm sure half of you twits have been warned by your parents already, for the other half that wasn't, then here's the deal: you shut your damn mouth and you follow the Professor's orders! Understood!?"

"Right," The male Gubernator spoke next. The boy seemed to have sixteen or maybe seventeen years, he was sporting a pair of Quidditch gloves and looked sourly pissed at the entire first year, albeit maybe it was the squared jaw and the death glare. "Now first off, if you can't yap a word in English you shut your damn mouth and study! There's an extra course for learning the language of the micks, the jocks and the pommies and you're all forced to learn it! So I hope you..." word in a Germanic accented tongue, "get it, because I won't repeat myself again."

"Now," the female Praefectus began again, "You'll be bunking together with others of your same sex, no relationships are allowed at Durmstrang and if you're found in the bed of someone else with that someone else then you'd better have an excuse ready."

Several of the first years actually had the decency to make sounds of disgust. Heinrich raised an eyebrow. Why were they telling this to the first years?

"Secondly, we at Durmstrang do not believe in pranks or bullying." The Gubernator continued, "We believe in discipline and corporal punishments however. You will find out that there are things worse than a good flogging pretty soon however, so one last word of advice for you little kids..."

Silence stretched in the entrance for few minutes, as everyone quieted down from their murmurs to hear what the boy had to say.

"Stand tall and hold yourself with pride! Durmstrang will bring you to greatness, but remember that you must carve your own path towards it!"

"Clap you idiots!" The Praefectus snapped, getting an immediate ovation from the crowd of first years, with Heinrich clapping hesitantly and looking with peculiar look at Jean herself, who was lost in thoughts. Well, it was too late for second thoughts, and just how much different could Durmstrang be from Hogwarts to begin with?

The tour began with passing through the entranceway, the long corridor of stone pierced deeply within the titanic iceberg until the air slowly began to grow warmer, if 'from minus fifty' to 'minus thirty' was a difference in temperature of course. The warming charm was actually a pretty good thing to have memorized. The long tunnel ended with an opening that led once more outside, but this time within the inner confines of the iceberg in question, which held a plain composed mostly of dirt and rocks with few sparse bushes of grass. Deep within the barren land stood an old looking castle upon a hill, surrounded by crooked and blackened trees with a cobblestone road leading up to the castle's moat.

The sky was crystal clear, albeit they had just passed through a storm to reach the bay of the Iceberg. Heinrich understood now what it meant with Durmstrang having the most space out of all schools. The plain took them an entire hour of march to pass through, and by the time they reached the moat of the castle they were exhausted. The first years that is, Heinrich was merely catching his breath

slowly, while Jean seemed bewildered by the sheer amount of walking they had to do.

She hadn't spoken yet though, probably with good conscience considering how the Praefectus was apparently hounding on her with her eyes. He had no idea why, but the Gubernator was doing the same thing with him. Probably because they were third years, or probably because the Headmaster of Durmstrang had asked the two to keep an eye out on them. In any case, the group passed through the moat as the bridge was lowered to let them through, before lifting itself back up and leaving them all in pitch black darkness.

There was silence, if not for the tell-tale sound of water dripping on cold hard stone floor. Heinrich didn't move as he took a deep breath, the dark mixed with the sound of dripping water reminded him somehow of the Chamber of Secrets. Yet as he stood there taking deep calming breath, he could hear those of Jean becoming more and more hitched as her hands searched for his arm and clenched it.

Heinrich understood then. This was so much like Azkaban that Jean as starting to believe something that wasn't there to begin with. Maybe she hadn't completely healed from the exposure, but if her hard breathing was of any notice, she appeared on the verge of having a nervous breakdown. Heinrich 'official' wand came out from his sleeve slowly, as he carefully moved Jean quietly behind him. If this was some sort of 'christening' the new students, then...

"FIRST YEARS..."

"LUMOS MAXIMA!" Heinrich had expected his spell to merely light on the area. Truly, he had expected the addition of 'maxima' to increase the light so as to comfortably take in his surroundings. He had expected the very same level of power of his old wand.

He hadn't expected his new wand to have completely different parameters of work. The light that came out was as blinding as that of the sun, directed into a beam that struck against the ceiling and pulsed, surrounding the entire room in a surprisingly white glow. The result was like being in a tan tank, only the neon lights were everywhere.

"Argh! You're ruining everything!" A voice echoed through the hall. "Stop the spell for Merlin's beard, stop the spell!" Heinrich flicked his wrist, and the next moment people had to rub their eyes to adjust to the now far more dimmer room.

"Thanks." Jean whispered next to him. Heinrich merely nodded back before turning to the source of the voice that was apparently floating over towards them with an angry face.

"I must say!" The ghost appeared to be a pirate, with a hat and a ghostly parrot on his shoulder. He wielded a cutlass and held an eye-patch on his right eye, a thick beard that once was probably luxurious and well-kept flailed wildly in front of the ghost's body. The ghostly figure hovered to a stop in front of Heinrich, squaring him upside down before grumbling. "Well? You think it's funny to ruin my fun boy? I scare the firsties only once a year! Astrid! Why the hell didn't you stop the boy!?"

The Praefectus walked forward with a light cough, "Captain Blackbeard, we thought he wouldn't react so quickly."

"You realize it's a pity then." 'Blackbeard' muttered, "My presentation, woe to you boy, woe to you..." The ghost pirate then turned around, and 'spitting' to the side disappeared through a wall. Heinrich kept his face as neutral as possible, probably because he was trying to avoid displaying shock or surprise. Of course old castles had ghosts...stupidly, he hadn't thought about that.

"Are we going to expect trouble from you, boy?" The Gubernator queried strongly a few seconds later, eying him with distaste.

"No." Heinrich replied, "I...I'm sorry," he added carefully, "I just reacted on instinct."

"It was my fault." Jean quickly interrupted the conversation, "I'm terrified of the dark and he..."

"Not asking you girl." The Gubernator snapped back, "Keep your nerves on you from now on, understood?" The older boy added with a low growl, eying him with barely repressed contempt.

"Yes sir." Heinrich answered quickly.

"Good. Keep it that way: Astrid, get these third years to their floor while I take care of the firsties." The Gubernator snapped, as the Praefectus girl now known as Astrid nodded back, before gesturing for the two of them to follow.

Leaving behind the group of slightly worried first years, Heinrich began to walk in silence alongside Jean, both of them following the Praefectus through a red carpeted hallway that held paintings of lords and knights of clear Teutonic descent. Some of the symbols were Germans, while others appeared Austrian with a mixture of Russian and generally of the Northern area of Europe.

"Durmstrang holds as many as one thousand seven hundred students at any time." Astrid began to explain, "The entire complex known as 'Durmstrang' is built upon three giant Icebergs interconnected and kept eternally from melting thanks to magic. The storm that surrounds the complex is passable only through specific ships that have to bear the symbol of the school."

"But...I read the castle was near a river and...that it had mountains." Jean began hesitantly, probably not willing to receive a snappish remark so soon after having her nerves shaken. Heinrich looked at the girl with concern. He'd probably have to speak with her soon enough after all: he doubted speaking with magical Hitler had worked in calming her down...and he was already mad enough to give her some insight at least on how to behave. If anything, he wouldn't be the only one having a tea party with the mad hatter eventually.

"One of the castles does." Astrid replied nodding. "It's the one for the fourth, fifth and sixth years. It's bigger and it's located on the second Iceberg. The third one instead is only for the seventh years and the people visiting for the updating courses."

"Just how big is this place?" Heinrich asked surprised, well, not exactly. If it had to harbor a thousand and seven hundred students...divided per seven years of scholastic institute, then it meant something like two hundred and forty-two students per year. Considering the workload and assuming that the headmaster's words were true about multiple teachers for the same subject, then just how big were the classes and how many students could a class be composed of?

"Quite big." Astrid replied taking a flight of stairs upwards, "There is a set of space enlarging charms tied directly in to the wards too. Many rooms were the size of cupboards originally and now can hold six bunk-beds without problems." The blond haired plump girl walked sternly through a set of armored suits...on armored horse suits on a very large hallway. "Ignore the armors. They tend to act cranky in the morning because they play all night long."

Heinrich raised an eyebrow before looking at a suit of armor, who stared back at him with a defiant...Helmet-look, because there were no eyes to stare back at. He filed it for later, deciding his brain had taken in the 'magic' of Hogwarts, and that Durmstrang was merely no different. So what if they had armor suits playing at night...he hoped they had silencing charms for the room.

"Now, all classes are held on the same floor of the dormitories," Astrid continued, "Tomorrow morning you will be down in the dining hall and I'll hand over your lesson plans. For today you can explore freely, ask a portrait or something for help if you need it...but don't ask the statues out by the back garden. They hate students for some reason and they speak in a strict Dutch dialect that makes no sense."

"Anything else to be wary of?" Heinrich asked, "I know for sure there's a dangerous forest somewhere..."

"Yes kid, but that's for the Seventh year to have nearby. You don't really think we'd have first years stay next to the Wahnsinnig Forest now, right?"

"Wahn...Whan...Whansingin...sinnig?" Heinrich muttered trying to pronounce it as the girl had, but failing miserably in his endeavor.

"Wahnsinnig. Where are you from, Belgium? Norway? You don't look like an Italian and you're not Russian to begin with."

"Italian? Why would Italians be at Durmstrang?" Jean piped in curious, trying to divert the conversation and actually succeeding in it.

"Because Durmstrang moves and usually we're docked at the Bermuda triangle," which now gave far more than a good reason concerning the 'haunted' myth of the place, "And we've got the best

courses of Seamanship in the wizardry world. The Universitatis in Italy offers nothing more than a field day in the stuff, here we get you on a ship and we bring you back a man...or a corpse." Astrid smiled sweetly, "Fourth years even get to build their own boats if they want to." She added wistfully. "Usually the Italians transfer in at the start of the third year, since it's when the electives come in. We also have some from France who refuse Beauxbatons and some from Germany too."

They had by then reached yet another staircase, passing by rooms that had on the side numbers and letters, probably the classrooms. As they began to climb the last staircase between them and their rooms, Heinrich found himself once more wondering about the differences. It made sense now that Durmstrang was bigger. Still...

Oh no.

"Do British Wizards transfer here too to attend the Seamanship course?" He asked, holding his breath. If a transfer from Hogwarts came around...they'd be screwed. Sure, Hermione was now Jean and had raven hair, while he was now Heinrich Prince and had blond hair, blue eyes and lacked glasses as colored lenses were easier to use...and also did the eye coloring. He was kind of the perfect little Nazi boy. Hitler would have put him with the Nazi youth had he seen him.

"No, there's a school over in Ireland for that," Astrid replied, "We do have some Australian wizards too though, and some from South Africa and Brazil."

"Do all of them enjoy taking boat rides?" Heinrich asked curious by the sheer amount of people who seemed to enjoy travelling by boat. Wasn't Floo powder good enough? Apparition and Portkeys too? Why would so many people want to learn how to travel by boat of all things?

"For many it's tradition," Astrid replied carefully, "And since we can't have Quidditch matches for most of the season since it's not safe while moving Durmstrang, sailing by boat is an admirable sport."

"Wait. How..." Heinrich received a giggle from the plump girl in reply, who nodded.

"Ah yes, you wonder: how can people on boats not get lost in the storm outside? Well, the three Icebergs are connected as a triangle, you see? So the center is a free pool of sea water. There are the inner docks for the students who wish to build their ships and battle one another...it's a good sport, better than Quidditch for many."

So while Hogwarts had Quidditch...Durmstrang had naval battles. Strangely he half suspected, mostly out of his deranged mind of course, that the school got funding also from the military to perform live field tests. It as something that came out of spy flicks of course, something that probably held no possibility to be true but still...with all this talk on 'external' advisors and the likes...the sheer numbers and all, just how did Durmstrang cover all of this with its budget when Hogwarts as a whole barely had one teacher for a class of twenty or more?

"The lessons start on the First of September," Astrid continued, "But they're in general revisions of stuff done the previous years at least for the first few weeks, in order to get aboard all students from the other countries we pass by on our way." The girl added, "Here is your room," she said while pointing to a mahogany door that held four name plates.

Jean Gregorovitch.

Hilda Gould.

Gertrude Fortuyn.

Brigitte Eisenberg.

"They're all third years. We shuffle students at the change of every year to make sure they get to meet new people." Astrid commented proudly, "Follow me for the moment though: let's get Heinrich here to his own room." As they kept on walking, Heinrich could feel a distinctive lack of...of emotions. This wasn't like when he had first entered Hogwarts. Sure, this place was magical and held its own history and quirks, but it wasn't Hogwarts. It was...something else. It felt strange to actually comment on it, but it just...it didn't feel right to be here. A few ghosts passed by, dressed like Spanish Conquistadores and moving forward at the sound of a loud fanfare, while Astrid clicked her tongue in remembrance.

"Nearly forgot: we get some Spanish too from time to time, albeit they generally do go to their own academy." It took him a few more minutes to realize he still had no general clue why people would leave their own country to get to Durmstrang and get aboard their seamanship course. Sure, he knew it was because of its 'scholastic' purpose and because it seemed the school's preferred sport, and he could understand that, but the 'why' still stuck to him as a bit strange.

There had to be something else concerning it after all. He'd ask around eventually, but till then he stopped to look at the plague Astrid had gestured towards him.

Heinrich Prince.

Elmo Luzzatto.

Thomas Goossens.

Nikolai Sidorov.

"And this is your room." Astrid stated, "the Dining hall is just straight ahead of the entranceway: you cannot miss it. Students take turn cooking with the house elves. Do not enter the kitchens. It is prohibited to pilfer food from the larder and the house elves have been ordered to immediately warn the nearest Praefectus or Gubernator of who is doing the deed. You will be severely punished if you break the curfew at ten in the night, and during the weekends you will be granted permission, if approved by your guardian, to visit Miami once we reach the Bermuda Triangle."

"Miami." Heinrich deadpanned.

"Yes." Astrid replied without blinking. "The Bermuda triangle is near the North America."

"So...Durmstrang is a complex of Icebergs. It travels from Northern Europe down to Australia while passing through Russia, France, Spain, Italy and South Africa. It picks up the students and then heads over to Miami. All in less than a couple of weeks." He asked again in order to be sure.

"Yes." Astrid replied again, raising an eyebrow in questioning. Probably trying to understand what had him shocked. "Is there a problem?"

"And it's been doing this since its founding?" Heinrich quietly asked.

"Course not." Astrid rolled her eyes, "Only since eighteen ninety-six."

"Little less than a century then." The boy replied quietly, "And nobody realizes this? I mean: what of the American wizards?"

"What of them?" The girl asked curious, but with the glint of a smirk as if she was having fun with him.

"Isn't Durmstrang...kind of belonging to a government?"

"Certainly not." Astrid replied firmly, "Durmstrang is a ship in international waters, has always been and will always be. We get permission to disembark the students, the American Wizards get the students' galleons when they go and visit Magical Miami, and everyone is happy."

"And why does nobody realize that Durmstrang is a giant moving ship?"

"Wards. They make people not ask the right questions." Astrid nodded.

"So...magic."

"Magic." The blond girl nodded again.

Heinrich, on the other hand, felt the wave of a massive headache hit him. Just how small had he believed the world to be? One thousand and seven hundred students? This was a veritable army, a veritable fort...a fortress. One of the many...the prophecy had given him a choice hadn't it? A choice...a choice Gellert wanted him to make. The man...the man hadn't let him bleed on the wards of Nurmengard because of this. Because he wanted him to choose between Durmstrang and Nurmengard, between the Inferi or this massive, this...this titanic thing of magic.

Yes, the headache he was feeling was making him feel completely out of his right state of mind.

He had to sleep. Sleep and think it all over calmly the next day.

Probably.

If he didn't kill Gellert with his own hands of course.

Author's notes

And Durmstrang is done.

I made Durmstrang a 'floating fortress' that ties in with the prophecy and has thus no problem with his placement (since it moves), furthermore I nicely tied in the sheer ignorance of the magical world that Harry/Heinrich still has, because being a thirteen years old does not mean knowing everything. And this also explains why Gellert postponed the 'marking' of Nurmengard. He couldn't say it out loud but couldn't even let the boy pass up on it.

Now, as for the names on the plagues: they're Dutch/German/Austrian for Jean, and Italian/Belgian/Russian for Heinrich. Of course the countries they belong to aren't the same as to where I took the names from, but I did have to take slightly different names to showcase the 'internationality' of the school. If you expect me to pull a 'Rowling' and write over a thousand OCs, think again. The third year is all about duality and coming to terms with certain things.

Although the 'Tide of Darkness' and the Seamanship course do have a nice ring don't they?

(We'll have Lillian's third year too of course, worry not)

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 8

The exploration of Durmstrang was met with quite a bit of resistance from the castle's furniture. The paintings, while clearly trying their best to be obnoxious, did not know a word of English. The few who did had somehow died because of an Englishman, and the fewer still that could actually help them demanded prices to be paid in doubloons and pieces of eight. He now understood why the emphasis was still set on Seamanship. Durmstrang had been set as a Viking School soon after the eleven sixty-four, following the Christianization of Scandinavia.

Wizards, of course, weren't loved by Christians. The best place to set up an education came to be the sea, and thus Durmstrang evolved from a mere giant barge to an iceberg floating fortress, to the institute that now was responsible for all the disappearances in the 'Bermuda Triangle'. Mostly the disappeared would reappear none the wiser with their memory obliterated, but sometimes a plane ended up crashing down in the Seventh year forest and the crew would later on die because of the beasts and the poisonous plants.

In the end, the most they had visited had been the library of the castle. It wasn't as big as that of Hogwarts, but did hold its own books written in Cyrillic letters or Latin, with various translations in French, Dutch and German. The school might have evolved its curriculum, but some of the facilities remained for those who knew the old tongues. As the morning left the place to the lunch hour, Heinrich found himself walking through the entranceway, followed by Jean who was still chatting passionately on about the age of some of the library's book.

The girl was a chatterbox: that much he had come to term with. Maybe it had to be her way to cope with the stress of the situation, to chat him to death, but could he fault her? He was feeling uneasy about the all situation, hundreds of questions and worries kept on pouring up within him, ranging from the 'What if someone we know sees us' to the 'What if we are found by an auror?' and so on.

Jean refused to ask herself those questions probably, and that was the reason she was actually talking that much. Refusing reality never meant for anything good after all, did it? One has to accept

himself, his actions, to become someone better, someone stronger. Yet he was exaggerating. Jean was a muggleborn, she didn't know about magic just like him, and just like him she was probably hoping to leave everything behind and have a 'normal' witch life.

Had he been like that too? He bitterly smiled as he realized there were few people of the third year seated, soon joined by a bunch more. There were four tables just like at Hogwarts, but they weren't divided by House or anything like that. People simply congregated where they wanted to and grabbed the food, still warm probably due to a charm, from the center of the tables themselves.

As he sat down and found himself staring in the dead orbits of a half charred and half cooked fish of sorts, he couldn't help but blink. Were the fishes around the place that big to begin with? He decided to ignore that question, opting for a large serving of the potatoes that accompanied the food and generously covered in a sort of reddish sauce that was aptly spiced. Fish was followed by meat, namely under the form of a roasted doe that had been cut into pieces and served wrapped in bacon and grease. Once more the servings were more than generous and yet no matter how many people entered the hall, there seemed to be always more.

"The Fourth years have gone beyond themselves!" A voice to his left commented, soon joined by one in front of him, belonging to a fair haired and pale skinned boy who seemed to possess dark eyes.

"First day at school, no lessons, good food...The...English is a bit rusty, but it can work." The speech was heavily accented, Russian or German of sorts probably.

"I say I'm glad I took those private lessons in English and Latin," the voice to his left said again. Heinrich turned slightly his head to the side, to look at the figure that was apparently eating something like thrice the normal amount. His gaze landed on a plumb boy with dark hair and brown eyes, the perfect example of the overweight American student, if not for the fact that his English held a slightly French 'r' and was apparently wearing what looked like a golden anchor emblem strapped to his left forearm's fur.

"Reading Cyrillic will not be a problem," the other boy replied carefully. "My cousin started here this year too today you know?"

"Oh...Olga, right?"

"Indeed! Ah how time flies!" The probably Russian student exclaimed, "It was yesterday that I flung her into the Fjords to leave me alone."

"Yes...because throwing kids off a cliff is a good way to see if they're magical or not." The plumb boy replied uneasily, with a nervous laugh.

"It certainly helped she was alive afterwards." The Russian nodded, "I was but ten years old! She was pestering me and so I took her and threw her."

"Remind me never to pester you then." The other stated. "Not when near a cliff at list."

"Ah Elmo, I would need three more of my brothers to haul you off a cliff." The Russian chuckled back.

"See? That's why I eat this much: safety in weight I say, can't be kidnapped that way!" The plumb boy whose name was apparently Elmo replied with a hearty laughter. "So Sergei, are you going to be all right with your new roommates?"

"Worry not! I will throw them out should they try anything." The Russian replied, "The third floor is not yet tall enough to do lasting harm, no?"

Heinrich received an elbow to the sides by Jean, making him spin and raise an eyebrow at the girl's action. Jean had been apparently chatting with another girl on her right side, since she too was now looking at him. The girl had dark blond hair and a pudgy face, sort of stocky and square shouldered, and her blue eyes were apparently squaring him appreciatively.

"Heinrich, this is Brigitte Eisenberg, she's one of my roommates! Isn't it wonderful? I'm sure she can help us get better acquainted with the school."

"Of course," the Germanic accent of the dark blond girl was thick, "It would be a pleasure to do so."

"Eisenberg! Has your zeppelin...Hiddenburrow-something fallen yet?" The plumb boy to his left exclaimed, "Didn't see you coming in here!"

"The name of the Zeppelin was Hindenburg you horrendous polentone." Brigitte replied snappishly, "You will have to forgive him: he has the same tact as a Panzer."

"And you are as beautiful and gentle as the kindest of the SS." Elmo answered right back.

"Thank you." Brigitte commented with a curt nod, "I will remember it when my Bismarck will destroy whatever ship you can bring up. Let us go, Jean, we'll be better off away from the rabble." As Brigitte stood up to leave, Jean looked for a moment back at Heinrich, who nodded and gestured for her to go. He would stay instead: after all he had just probably found one of his roommates to begin with.

Jean hesitated for a second, but then followed behind the stocky thirteen years old girl who spoke of 'Hindenburg' and 'Bismarck'. He had had enough of magical Nazis for once, so he'd rather stick with the allied front at least for this year at Durmstrang. Maybe it was a bit selfish to leave Jean alone, but she'd survive none the worse. As long as she remembered her side of the story and he is, everything would be fine.

"Not going with the SS Fraulein?" Elmo asked suddenly, locking eyes with him.

"Well...I'm Heinrich Prince, one of your roommates." He began hesitantly: maybe he should have gone with the girl. There was the chance this boy would...

"Ah! It's a pleasure!" The Italian replied happily grabbing his hand to shake it, "I'm Elmo Luzzatto, and this here is Sergei: he was my old roommate. Do not make him angry if you don't want to be thrown out of a window." The dark haired boy nodded, as he extended his own hand to shake that of Sergei himself.

"And don't worry if he starts kissing you or tries to: it's how the Russians say hello." Elmo added, "Which is the reason I decided never to say hello to Sergei unless there's a door between me and him. He understands of course."

Heinrich couldn't help but cough at that, his spit having gone astray in his throat as nearly choked on it. A small look and his shoulders sagged in relief, as both Elmo and Sergei were laughing. Their presentations done, the trio left the dining hall heading towards one of the towers that stood nestled atop a hill, still within the castle's walls.

"So, Heinrich...you from Germany?" Sergei asked.

"No," he replied carefully, "I'm from the Vosges area, in France." Slowly he began to add, "Beauxbatons was closer for the first years, but I wanted to have more choice for my future so I transferred here."

"Ah, Bawd-baton." Sergei said with a nod. "Etiquette and the use of a dessert spoon, no?"

Heinrich merely chuckled nervously, nodding back with unease. He knew he should have memorized just what a first and second year student did at that school, but he hadn't and so he now went with the flow hoping it would be enough. The chat veered to more safe arguments concerning expectations from Durmstrang and comparison with other schools they had heard of through hearsay, before Sergei bid them goodbye and left him to chat with his Italian roommate.

"And this here is the study hall." Elmo pointed out, moving his arm in an arc gesture to the room they stood in. A polished stone floor with a fire pit nestled within the wall as far as possible from the door welcomed them in. Wooden benches and tables stood with small shelves cluttered with books all around with no apparent logical reason. "Of course it will be empty most of the time." The Italian muttered with a shrug, "Durmstrang values more the practical aspects than the theoretical ones. The spell casting grounds on the other hand are always full."

"I see," Heinrich replied interested, "They let students fight each other?"

Elmo snorted. "Merlin no! With the stuff they teach, they wouldn't let kids fire a spell at each other even under death threat. Was Beauxbatons different?"

"Well, there was the dueling club..."

"Dueling is a sport that is done by the sixth and seventh years," Elmo replied carefully, "Because it's dangerous. You have to be at the very least mature enough to know what spells you may cast and what you may not. A child is more trying to outgun his opponent than to win: hence the increased risk and thus the prohibition for dueling to students below the sixth year."

He hummed at those words in thought. The way this school was appeared to be completely different from the way Hogwarts was being kept. It was strange how putting things this way made sense, and how things that had made sense at Hogwarts now didn't. The dueling club in the second year was an example: it was a dangerous thing, kids could get hurt by firing a spell their opponent wouldn't be able to catch and yet it had been done with a bright smile and a wink of acceptance from the Headmaster.

This level of maturity wasn't something he had expected, and that froze him slightly on the spot as he realized he hadn't been talking about his peers of age, but about the school itself. He hadn't expected the school to do the sensible thing instead of the cool thing. He had expected this school to be like Hogwarts, with troll running rampart and Basilisks and secret ploys going around.

This school wasn't Hogwarts. There were no secret ploys, deep hidden secrets, plans or anything like that. This was a school, maybe stern on discipline with the off chance of corporal punishment, but still a school. A school where he could learn things with other students his age, a school that did not divide people in houses and was as multicultural as it could be, and...and he didn't know how to react to that. His expectations crumbled as he bit his lower lip in worry. He had lowered his guard once, and the result had brought him under the wing of Gellert Grindelwald himself.

Should he risk doing so again? The castle seemed normal, yet...who knew what truly hid itself away behind the façade of normalcy?

"The grounds are more to see the effects of the spells on transfigured animals," Elmo added carefully, "It was put in place after Grindelwald's experiments came out. You should have a look

at the wall he carved the Deathly Hallows symbol on too: it's a piece of history."

"It's in this castle?" He asked curiously.

"No of course, it's in the middle-years one. He was a sixth year when he was expelled." Elmo replied, before closing the door of the study hall and heading off towards yet another room, "They say that at sixteen he could overpower the entire school's staff, such was his power."

Heinrich uneasily shifted from one foot to the other as he walked, trying to filter the information for what it was worth, but at the same time...at the same time comparing himself to the man in question. At sixteen, a sixth year...he had three years to reach his own potential, and one more year to surpass him, for he held little doubt he'd have until the end of Durmstrang to become powerful enough to face Dumbledore.

"You still with me Heinrich?" The question brought him out of his thoughts and back into the matter at hand. His roommate was now showing him what looked like a giant painted rendition of Durmstrang itself, done on a wall as a fresco. Three icebergs stood in a triangle with the castles drawn perched on each of them, tied together around the corners by what looked to be golden ropes. The middle was a spherical like lake while the words that composed the motto of Durmstrang stood on a single line that went from the castle on the top all the way down to the middle of the base of the...

The symbol of the Deathly Hallows portrayed as a painting stood in all of its glory in front of Heinrich, and as a lurching feeling of wrongness instilled itself deep within his soul he realized that no, he had been wrong. There was something in this place, something wrong, deeply hidden and placed where none could find it and yet at the same time so very much present. The wrongness was there, it was something he felt and understood and yet could not pinpoint. His instincts had never been wrong.

Durmstrang hid something. The castles themselves were hiding something that made his very own bones chill as his heart spiked. The question was what. What was the school hiding that made him feel the need to run away?

"I never thought of Durmstrang like this, you know?" Elmo said after a few moments, "I mean...I was expecting some old gothic looking castle perched on a hill with spooky ghosts and hungry looking monsters beneath the beds. I was surprised as much as you are when I realized it was a floating fortress, so modern and updated with the times that it brought the students to Miami of all places for the weekends." The boy added, "I was surprised when the letter came too: apparently my great-grandfather was a student here and so they had a spot reserved for me."

"Y...Yes," Heinrich replied, his eyes darting through the hallway that had seemed so normal no less than a minute before, and that now instead was looking oppressive, as if it would constrict on him and kill him where he stood if he dared make a wrong move. Just what was wrong with him? Had he finally got to the point where he had to have psychotic breaks? Was he finally breaking down into suffering from senseless bouts of paranoia?

"Why is your uniform different?" He suddenly asked, eying the golden anchor symbol that stood on the boy's shoulder.

"Oh this?" Elmo replied carefully, "It's given to a few who want to try out for the captainship post in the fourth year. If you do well enough in third year, they give you a school's ship by the fourth."

"Why was Brigitte speaking about 'her Bismarck' then?" At the question, Elmo snorted.

"Because her family's rich and has gifted quite a bit of money to the school: so they got to buy a new ship dubbing it the 'Bismarck'...she's probably going to captain it anyway coming this year. Would be good for her to lose to an upper year, arrogance she has and all."

There had to be a story behind the antipathy between the two, but it wasn't his business to understand it. It did however bring him the chance to ask another question that was actually making him curious.

"What's the seamanship course about? Mock battles?"

Elmo chuckled. "Oh yes, if you consider the roaring of cannons and the screams of the wounded as 'mock' then indeed, it's a lesson of life I suppose."

"Wh...What?"

Screams of the wounded? Was this another joke? Yet the boy did seem serious enough actually.

"Well, of course nobody dies at the end," Elmo rolled his eyes, "Some cases of drowning have occurred, but those are actually the student's mistake. There are three things you need to know before boarding a ship: the Protego, the Flipendo and the Sticking Charm. That and know when to use them while the ship stirs."

"And what of the cannons?" Heinrich asked curious.

"What of them? They're sort of magical too. The ship's got these panels on both sides made of paper that are put on and react to magical signatures. The cannons eject a slightly stronger version of Flipendo through a set of runes when they're touched by a wand, having wider range but being fixed on their positions. The more papers on a ship's flank are destroyed the slower the ship goes." Elmo replied, "It's basically like a real battle, only the most you risk is being flung out of the ship and into the water."

"Oh. That doesn't sound bad." He replied with a small smile. It didn't seem that horrible, as long as one knew how to swim or didn't actually fall down. There probably were professors overlooking it all and the shore wasn't all too far away. So...it didn't seem bad.

"No, it doesn't." Elmo shrugged back, "First few months are done teaching the new kids, which would be us by the way, how to stay on a ship. I got this because my family has been on the business for a long while."

"You know, I'm curious: why use ships when there are planes, portkeys, apparition spots..."

"Sometimes you need to carry a really big cargo," the Italian replied with a shrug, "Sometimes it's cheaper. A ship can carry, let's say, a hundred or two hundred people at once, and portkeys are not really suggested for small kids or pregnant women just like

apparition...Some prefer doing trips for the sake of visiting the world slowly, and the good old sea travel never went out of fashion and never will."

"Why the warfare then? I mean..."

"Why not?" Elmo replied, "You know that just as long as there will be ships, there will be pirates? Well it's the same, but more than that however it's the responsibility. When you're on a ship, you're not alone. There could be your passengers, or your cargo that you have to protect. If you're under attack, how would you go about? It's not just pointing a wand and muttering a spell: it's about if it's best to have Protego launched to protect your left flank or suffer the volley to get in a barrage of your own. It's to know that what you do may or may not get your crew killed or your fellow crewmen."

"So it teaches people to be responsible." He finally understood why it was such a big deal. It wasn't just a game, it was a slice of life given off and fed to the students, and yet he wondered now why Hogwarts didn't have something like that. Hogwarts had Quidditch: people flying on brooms that passed around Quaffles and tried to catch a Snitch while aiming Bludgers around. This seemed awfully more complicated and yet more instructive than anything else.

"How are the crews decided?" He asked curiously, as they ended up reaching the stairs that would lead them down below, to the boathouses.

"Captain's prerogative," the plumb boy spoke as he made his way expertly through a small corridor while avoiding to hit with his massive girth a few crates and boxes laying around. "Usually the second years get all these crazy pamphlets about joining a crew of a fifth or sixth year, since you know, the ships while largely magical still need people to direct them."

"You know, when you say ship, just what are we talking about?"

"What do you think I'm talking about? The oldest type of ship ever to be built, and yet the sturdiest ever!" Elmo opened a door, and then gestured him inside the inner docks themselves. "The caravels!"

Within a rock basin of water, small scale replicas of caravels stood floating gently, all with different colors and flags. The basin was

displayed to the right side of the dock's door, while the massive open cave that gave way to the inner lake of the complex held to its left side a giant sort of dark hole in the rock. There was enough space within for far more than one ship to be docked, and yet there were none. Only the rock basin stood to the side, while Elmo was merely chuckling.

"You touch a ship from the rock basin and then the house elves get it prepared," he pointed out at his querying glance, "Then it comes over here from there," pointing at the dark cave to their side, "And it stops long enough to get people aboard." The boy sighed, "We had a few trips in our second year to get the hang of how it worked, so we wouldn't just be staring with our mouths open."

"I see..." Heinrich chuckled nervously.

"Why did you get on the Seamanship course to begin with?" Elmo asked suddenly, looking at him with a mixture of curiosity and interest.

Good question. Why did he choose the Seamanship course? Because he had been told he had 'sea eyes' or what it was? It had been a thing of the moment hadn't it?

"Add Elemental spells and Ancient Runes to your electives and you'll end up doing the same school courses as I did."

The same school courses as Gellert Grindelwald. The old wizard had said so when he had made his choice hadn't he? Did that mean he had been somehow manipulated into doing it? But then why would it have mattered to him, if it was his own purpose to become as powerful as Grindelwald himself?

He knew the answer to that question after all, didn't he? He knew the answer and it made him cringe. In his journey for survival, would he become like the very beasts and monsters he was trying so hard to defeat? If that was the case then why, of all things, had he chosen the same path as Grindelwald himself? Why hadn't he chosen differently or, for what it matter, why hadn't he simply thought it over better?

He had a gut wrenching feeling that he knew the answer to that question too. He remembered the man's words on prophecies and

their binding a man's will to do their bidding. Was he already enslaved to follow the road? Was he already forced through this way, whatever it was? Was it already his destiny to open the road to Atlantis? But if that was what was asked to him...

Then why was he doing it? What would come out of it? What would happen afterwards?

"My...grandfather loved the sea," he replied embarrassed at the idiocy the answer seemed to reek of, "So I thought to try it out." He could still change his electives, couldn't he? The school started the next day, if he did change them, then would his destiny change, or would the prophecy find another way to make it true?

What was he fighting to begin with, Dumbledore or the prophecy? He hadn't realized it, but wasn't he playing straight in the hands of Gellert? Wasn't what he was doing something that the old wizard wanted him to do, for some reason that he did not know of? Was redemption really what the old man wanted, or was it something else that he would lie to him about?

His mind was still his, of that he was sure, and yet as he made small simple talk with Elmo, as he headed off to be just like any other normal thirteen year old student, he realized he just couldn't. He couldn't ignore, or forget, what he had done. He couldn't forget what he was and what he knew. He couldn't forget what he could become or what he had to do. He knew, and that knowledge was his tomb.

His fists clenched tightly as his face showed small smiles and nods. His thoughts screamed of escaping and running, but his body did not obey. He was trapped, strapped to chains made of fate and destiny, with no escape, no way out. To what, however, he did not know.

Fitting, he supposed.

He had questions with no answers, and the more time passed the more questions found lining up for answers. Eventually, would he find the truth out? He could just hope it was the case...but he knew all too well what hoping had given to him, so how could he trust something as fickle as hope again?

The answer was simple: he couldn't.

Lillian Potter

The train arrived at the station in a mood of gloom, as the sky itself seemed to share the general sentiment of the people within it. The rain had yet to fall, but she wouldn't it past the weather to begin the downpour as soon as she got out in the air. Dementors were circling the train and keeping an eye out for potential enemies, yet she knew deep down there were none.

Hermione had escaped from Azkaban together with Hagrid, avoiding a Death Sentence by Kiss. There was no way she'd be going back to Hogwarts, albeit Hagrid just might since he had nothing else. It was strange, but the Aurors had even gone as far as to check their house and place some small wards to notify them if anything strange happened, because Hermione just might find her.

That was impossible. Hermione might have been a bright witch and a good friend of hers, but she doubted she'd be able to find out where the Potter manor was located without help. It had been the subtle reference to him that had made her realize just what the aurors were implying.

Her brother, Harry, had barged into Azkaban with the help of Voldemort to free his followers. Azkaban had been breached for the first time in centuries, and the news had been all over the daily prophet before long. The death of one of the guards because of the Dementors themselves running amok had been jolted down too, and concerns had been raised on them being actually 'under control', albeit without Dementors, who would take care of the prisoners?

She entered the carriage that would pull her to Hogwarts with Ron, a blond haired Ravenclaw girl and Neville Longbottom of Hufflepuff. Nobody was in the mood for talking, and so in that nervous and strained silence, the carriage was slowly pulled towards the castle of Hogwarts.

"The Nargles have increased." The blond haired girl scrunched her face in a light frown, as she looked out of the window towards the castle. "They're storming around."

Ron huffed next to her, muttering. "Loony and her Nargles."

"Ron." Lillian hissed, before kindly talking to the younger girl, "Oh? I don't see anything."

"You wouldn't." 'Loony' replied, "The Nargles are good at hiding. They can be anything: even humans."

"Yes, right." She blinked in surprise, before hesitantly turning her head back towards the side of the carriage. The trees that stood tall near the road had their tops moving gently, the wind's breeze making them bend to the side as leaves rustled. The clouds were now getting darker and darker, as the first few drops of rain began to fall. The loud wails of the Dementors could still be heard in the distance, making her skin crawl and her teeth clatter.

"You think the ghosts are back after last year?" Ron suddenly asked, as they neared the gates that thankfully were covered by the massive stone arch. "And the portraits, I mean...it's not safe to have the entrance unguarded and all."

Lillian didn't bother to answer, instead her eyes were caught with the strange dash that the 'Loony' had done, running all the way to where a carriage with older years on had just trotted in. Descending from it she realized that the girl had been waiting for the red haired teen that she knew was one of Ravenclaws Prefects, and that was now also apparently the Head Boy, if the symbol on his robe was of any indication.

What was his name to begin with? Basileus...wasn't it?

She shrugged, before nodding absentmindedly to Ron and moving past the strange 'detectors' that Filch seemed to use to find out potential illegal stuff within the students' pockets. As if people weren't smart enough to leave their 'illegal' stuff in their trunks or have it sent by owl over the year.

This year would be different. They had their electives and their workload had increased considerably, but at the same time there would be Quidditch finally and she...she would be on the team. She was going to play as Seeker, and with the new Firebolt her father had bought her, she had no doubt she would squish the opposition. At the very least, it would be something to look forward to in the middle of all the courses she had chosen to take.

She had to reach her brother's level, and if he had really managed to enter Azkaban and breach it...then to what level was she meant to climb? Was her brother as strong as an Auror now? Was he as strong as a Hitwizard or maybe even more? To what levels...to what power, to what knowledge did he have access to in his years at school that had made him so?

She didn't know what had brought her brother to such heights, but she knew that this year she would find out, and she would follow in his steps. Maybe rummage a bit more in the Chamber of Secrets? There had to be a way to bring it back to how her brother had made it, after all. Some sort of code perhaps?

As she absentmindedly sat down at the Gryffindor table, waiting as the new first years were assigned to their houses, her eyes drifted once more up to the Ravenclaw table. Who could she ask of the Ravenclaws, about her brother's deeds that would answer her honestly? Her eyes drifted to the Head Boy.

Yes, she could ask him.

She could ask Basileus.

Author's notes

I know people are wrapping their heads around this sort of 'Bizzarro!' Durmstrang. I know people are actually wondering where the catch is, (because there's a catch, as always) but it wouldn't be a Mystery if all answers were given immediately, would it? I find it strange some people complain that they don't understand what's going on and so stop reading...when it's a Mystery genre. I mean, isn't the definition of Mystery that you don't know until it is explained? It's like wanting to know the culprit from the first chapter of a thriller book. What's the point of reading the book if the answer is already given?

One of the things I strive for is for people to ask themselves 'why' some things happen or 'why' some things are different. That said, I did indeed give 'Naval Warfare' as an equivalent to Quidditch to Durmstrang due to the 'Viking' past. (Quidditch is still there as is Viktor Krum of course.)

Elmo is the Italian for Helm (head protection), and it's a double meaning since the 'Helm of the ship' is the entire steering apparatus

of a ship. (Got it?) While Luzzatto is a northern Germany surname and that's all there is about the surname.

And while indeed Durmstrang is big, I'll like to point out that it's also simpler. (Three Icebergs, attached with wards, with three 'simple' castles on them and nothing grand) Hogwarts' castle, if you carefully read the Wikipedia entry, is actually far more complicated because: 'The castle is known for its many updates and changes in layout throughout the years, such as regenerating itself after the Battle of Hogwarts. It should be noted that some rooms in the school tend to "move around," and so do the steps on the grand staircase.' With 142 staircases, I can rest assured that the castle isn't only 'big' but it also loves to fool around. While many fanfictions do not even give the time of the day to such 'features' the point remains that Hogwarts has a lot of potential that is left untapped due to the lack of numbers.

Considering the school's position, and the lack of a 'centralized' schooling institute (Look at the Wiki, there are mentions of magical academic arts and the likes, instead of putting it all in a single school) Hogwarts shrank thus 'folding' itself as a sort of magical Hypercube. If the numbers were to grow, then so too would be the castle. (this is my personal opinion on the matter, mind you, but it is one I find highly logical due to the setting) The Empty classrooms are another sign of this, and the room of requirement is probably the highest example: it's a door to classrooms and rooms of the 'original' layout of the castle that have been folded into hyperspace because not needed any longer.

Durmstrang by comparison has to cater to the needs of the entirety of the 'northern' Europe and Russian, thus needs more space and should be 'bigger' but not complicated since it's younger in its making than Hogwarts of a good three hundred years.

As I put it, Hogwarts is and will remain the bigger one, but has been shrunk because both Durmstrang and Beauxbatons have choked it down in the number of students, reducing it to only those of Great Britain itself. It's logical, and while not pleasant to hear or read about, it's somehow explaining why there are empty classrooms, few people, little curriculum and the likes: the school is slowly dying, and pureblood decisions don't make it easy for muggleborns. The wonders of magic probably last until the boy/girl finds himself

wondering why his words have no decision in the government when Democracy in London exists.

Author's note done, see you next time!

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 9

Blood splattered through the walls of the classroom. Squeals, high pitched and cringing, echoed through his ears and shocked him beyond belief. He had killed a troll once, yet the animal had just died, it hadn't screamed to its death and the blood hadn't splattered around. This was different. The blood, crimson and so liquid looking, fell slowly in droplets around them.

"Diffindo is a cutting charm." The teacher explained carefully. The man had long raven hair falling down his back all the way nearly to the floor, and actually doubling as a belt around him. The eyes were a mixture of green and brown, and Heinrich who had the misfortune of being in the first row, was also being the one subjected to the stern and glacial gaze the instructor was handing over the classroom first.

"Diffindo is a cutting charm. I just killed this...this schwein with a spell you might use to cut a piece of thread from a dress." The voice was raucous, as the man's lithe frame moved away from the bled to death pig and turned to the chalkboard to write down the wand movement of both the Charm and the Curse.

"On the other hand, Seco is a Curse. Why you might ask, if both cut? Anyone knows the answer?" Silence stretched through the room as Heinrich began to think, mostly about the fact that the pig did seem to be morphing into a bag as the blood slowly returned to being mere sand.

A hand raised itself in the room, and as the professor nodded with a small gesture in the direction of the hand, the reply came in the clear voice of Jean.

"Curses are used with the intent of doing harm, sir."

"An excellent book answer, Miss Gregorovitch, yet not the correct one," the professor turned to the assembled class, his eyes scanning the room probably for someone else. Heinrich blinked as he saw the man look at him next, a small smirk displaying on the teacher's lips. The feeling of dread suddenly intensified.

"Mr. Prince, what is your answer?"

"I..." He looked once more at the bag of sand, with a clear cut visible on its side. "It depends on the power available?" He tried, hesitantly and with half a thought of having given the wrong answer.

"You are answering me or are you asking me, Mr. Prince?" The professor replied coolly, without giving away if the answer was right or wrong. Heinrich gulped, trying to recall if there actually was a difference but coming up short. In the end he could just wing it.

"I don't know sir." He finally answered.

"And I would not expect you to." The Professor of Offensive and Defensive magic replied. "It is subtle, but the answer is as follows: the Charm changes what an object does, the Curse acts on what the will is. The Diffindo cuts because it changes the cloth in order for it to cover less. The Seco instead acts upon the will to cut something, without caring for the why or the what. Both can achieve the same results, as long as your mind is thinking in the right way."

Hermann Student was the name of the professor of Offensive and Defensive Magic, and judging by his accent, he had to be from Germany. The man was neither a tyrant nor a friend of the student, he taught strictly just as the subject demanded him to, and Heinrich couldn't help but feel respect for the professor in question.

Respect for professors works in a strange way. He remembered the times at the elementary school near Privet Drive, when the Math teacher would enter and silence would follow. That silence was earned because of the respect for fairness. Just as the Art teacher was instead subjected to most of the chaos happening in the classroom, as the woman simply left them with brushes and paint to do as they wished. So too did Professor Hermann demand respect.

The fact he held little trouble in demonstrating magic with transfigured animals of various kind also helped in keeping the room silent during the lecture. There simply was no way a student would have the courage to ask a question or be disruptive when a pig squealed his last breaths having bled to death a few seconds before. It took the man little to start the lesson on spells that could cut, and how they could be used. While Diffindo was taught as a second year charm, Heinrich knew it wasn't taught as intensively as this.

The professor wasn't teaching Diffindo per se, but all spells and charms related to it that would cut. Be they Jinxes, Hexes, Curses or Charms. The various roots of the spell in Latin and their equivalents in different tongues ranging from Germanic to American were to be understood, more than memorized, and theory on why the wand movements were as such and what their variations implied was also heavily spoken of. It was learning. This was schooling.

He felt a pang of guilt at the thought that he had believed himself so superior at Hogwarts. There was a Latin saying that went hand in hand with how he was feeling: 'Beati monoculi in terra caecorum', those with one eye in the land of the blind are blessed. It was so much fitting him that he would have snorted at the thought, if he wasn't currently busying himself jotting down the notes in question.

He was probably going to get used to navigating in the dark labyrinth that was his life and the expectations people had of him eventually, but till then being 'one-eyed' perfectly fitted his theme of living. The ball pen he was writing with rolled nicely on his notes' book, while the pocket watch within his inner pocket added the small ticks and tacks to the scribbling noise of...

He took a deep calming breath, before slowly letting the thought leave his mind. Once the lesson was over and the class dismissed, he stood up to leave through the front door straight away. He avoided passing near Jean, and probably the hurt look on the girl's face was something he should ask for forgiveness later on. Carefully his steps took him towards his next class, while his hand rummaged through the inner folds of his Invisible cloak for the Pocket Watch of Salazar Slytherin.

His hands touched the instrument next to the Bezoar stone that had by now found its home within his inner pocket and that had yet to even see the light of the day again. Slowly and carefully he pulled it out, looking at the clock of the pocket watch. It was moving. The clock was moving. The watch was ticking. The...the pocket watch of Salazar Slytherin was once more functional. Its tick-tack sound was now clearly hearable as the two small golden arms of the clock spun normally, the even smaller one of the seconds ticking.

It was then that a thought landed carefully in his mind.

How could Salazar Slytherin possess a Pocket Watch of all things?

Weren't those invented later on, in the sixteenth century?

His eyes widened at the implication that this wasn't actually something belonging to Salazar, but something different. For what purpose however? It...it didn't make sense to actually give him something like this without another reason was there? Unless...

Unless it had some sort of tracking charm, and by making the item so precious to him it would make him all the more unwilling to separate himself from it. But...hadn't the ghost gifted it to him? Hadn't Helena of all people told him that it was the Watch of Misdirection of Salazar himself? Hadn't she told him...and hadn't he accepted it at face value?

If the pocket watch was now actually ticking and working like a normal clock, then something had to be wrong. Wasn't it meant to simply redirect the Obliviate spells and the mind reading? But now it was ticking. Was it ticking a countdown or was it ticking the hours of the morning? Had the magic left its body and brought it back to his normal self? He...he didn't realize he had begun to hyperventilate until he slammed hard against something sturdy that sent him on the floor, wincing from the pain on his backside.

"Ouch." He muttered, the pain taking away his fright of the situation as he realized that whatever he had slammed into was now cursing in a strange tongue. It stopped after a second, as he was carefully putting the watch back inside his inner pocket. He had to check on it, he had to check on a lot of things now. He...could he really trust the watch to actually have worked at any moment? What if it hadn't? What if it now stopped working?

"You right?" The English was there, broken and with a thick accent to distort it even further, but he merely nodded back at the question.

"Sorry." Heinrich said, "Wasn't looking...sorry again." He added, before dashing off once more. He didn't even give much of a gaze at who he had slammed against, because he just wasn't willing to waste time. He had to find out what it was all about. He had to learn what the watch could no longer do. Where was he going to find books on Occlumency? Where was he going to find the time to learn it? Was there a course to learn it? Would it be risky for a

professional to actually be involved in teaching to him? What if the man found out the truth?

He could trust the information in his brain to no-one. Not even Grindelwald was to know, because he could not be trusted. Maybe Jean...but she too would need to learn Occlumency. She...she was the solution! He'd have to convince her to learn it first, and then teach him afterwards. No, that plan wouldn't work: she too had things to hide. So someone else had to be the victim...but who could he choose?

Most importantly however, could he actually choose someone?

Lillian Potter

The common room was no longer the same without Hermione around. The photograph frame of Colin Creevey had been hung near the fire pit, and while the picture was muggle-made and thus immobile, some students still did pass by to pay their respects. There was an air of silence, but also of smug satisfaction at the thought that the ones ended up being burned had been the Ravenclaws and the Slytherins in the end.

The Heir of Slytherin had been the rebirthed Dark Lord in the end, as the tale had spread and gone far off the course the ministry itself had presented. A Death Eater had probably helped Harry in his plan to breach Azkaban and retrieve the accomplices. Never mind that Hagrid hadn't been accused of being an accomplice before then and Hermione had been revealed to have been drugged repeatedly to keep her sedated. It had just added to the well spun tale of the ministry that the Gryffindor girl had been also a drug addict.

Besieged on all sides, yet the King's men still stood with their ideal, headstrongly having booted out of the Slytherin table all those against and having begun their actions on the first years to drive them to their side. The Ravenclaws had largely gone their way: the few not following had been those too busy with Owls and Newts or in general not actually caring since they'd be out of Hogwarts soon. The Hufflepuffs that were a part of it could be counted on the fingers of a hand, since they had been members of the 'Founding Seven'.

The rest was fair game. Yet she didn't know how to do it. Who should she go to talk with? What should she do? Just how had Harry

managed to unite the students? Her brother seemingly went from an inspiring speech to another without fault or problem. Could she do the same? As she groaned and began doing her homework for the day, not willing to let even a single day go to waste in her quest to catch up with her brother, her eyes settled once more on the common room.

The air was far more distended than the years before. The lack of Harry at Hogwarts had brought forth this change, and...and she bit her lip. Would it be the right thing to bring him back? What if he actually had been following Voldemort out of his free will, because of his jealousy for her? She who was actually the one jealous of him, jealous of what he had: people who would be his friends for the sake of, and not because of a scar and fame she hadn't earned.

The air chilled itself suddenly, as a rasp and guttural noise came from outside the windows of the tower. The glass creaked as the rasping intensified, and as everyone stilled in their talking to look at the window in question, a sharp shrieking sound echoed through the common room.

"OPEN!" The Dementor outside screeched, "SEARCH!" She trembled as her legs already had taken her out of the chair and hesitantly towards the window that was now clearly foggy and covered with a thin sheet of ice. There was a Dementor outside, who was trying to enter by force if the clattering and the clanking against the window were of any indication. How such a beast had managed to get that far was something she didn't understand. There were wards outside of the dormitories most certainly: there was simply no way for a creature like a Dementor to reach them so...easily.

"OPEN!" The creature screamed again, and this time she took an uneasy second to look back at the rest of the common room. Nobody was moving, as if daring her to reach the window and open it. Carefully her hands clasped against the handle of the window, and when she pushed it down with a click to open it, it literally tore itself out of the hinges as a Dementor entered the common room with a sharp shrieking sound.

It hovered right in front of her, after its screams and shrieks brought the rest of the students to run away and hide. It looked straight at her, even though the hood covered most of the creature's face,

something seemed amiss that made her not afraid, no, but curious. Slowly, her hands went to the hood of the Dementor.

With trembling hands, she slowly lifted the thin black veil covering the creatures' face, and as she did that, the husk face of her brother Harry screamed at her with the same shrieking sound of the Dementors, before she screamed back in fear and fright...

And she woke up, huffing and panting.

She gasped for air and looked around her, as papers that had been on the table in front of her were now scattered all around. She had fallen asleep while studying. Lillian took deep calming breaths of relief as she chuckled nervously because of her stupid nightmare. Harry a Dementor? There just was no way for that to happen. It had to be the presence of those creatures roaming around Hogwarts that had made her dream that.

Heinrich Grindelwald

"He who holds the three fortresses of darkness shall bring forth its spawns.

The sons of a bloody past will obey the chosen of their lord.

The betrayed will come to him who holds their kin as their own.

The drinkers of life shall rise to the call of the master of Snakes.

Together, they shall open the path to the sunken city." He muttered to himself as he read through a book on divination. Of course with Gellert's interpretation already in his head it wasn't as if he could give it another meaning, since all roads he tried brought him back to believe that the Magical Hitler was right. After all how could he not be, when he had the experience and the power to sensibly be certain of his words?

Yet something felt missing of the entire ordeal...for one thing, it simply stated that they would open the path to the sunken city, not the city itself, and for second...who ever said that it had to be Atlantis? What if it was R'lyeh, home of Cthulhu and his star spawn? What if instead it was something else entirely, some sort of sunken city he knew not of?

That had brought him to look at other places, like the city of Ys near the Western coast of France. That too was a sunken city wasn't it? And if that wasn't enough, there were far more cities in the Wizardry world that had apparently been called 'Sunken' in different type of language than he could count on. It didn't have to be Atlantis the prophecy was speaking of.

It could just as well be a mere lackluster city in a remote corner of the world that had been unluckily built on a cliff, and then the cliff had fallen down in the sea. That would count as 'sunken' too. He just hoped there was no R'lyeh as a city to speak of. He wouldn't walk near Cthulhu, sleeping or not, not even in a thousand years. Still, Cthulhu had to be false after all, only the product of imagination.

Wasn't that the same for wizards however? If magic was real...then was Cthulhu? For what it mattered, were aliens real too, just like cosmic horrors from out of space?

The book of Divination was cast aside in favor of one about Magical Creatures, like Dementors, Vampires and Inferi. What could possibly require all three of them to reach a sunken city? Maybe it wasn't as much them as what they held, which meant their fortress? Maybe there was something in Azkaban, Nurmengard or Montechristo that could direct his course? And if instead it turned out to be something completely different?

What exactly would he need from those three fortresses? Their spawns? But for what...unless there was some sort of army protecting the sunken city, in which case the question was...why speak of the path and not of the entrance?

He groaned in frustration as he began to do his homework. It wouldn't do to postpone it, not with his schedule as it was and not with the fact that he had to cram in also a search for Occlumency books. He had discovered that those were sixth and seventh years course material, and since he didn't have an actual good enough reason to learn it as a pretense...unless...

Could he do it though?

Could he outright lie? Of course he could.

His homework done few hours later, his steps took him out of the study hall and towards the doors of the entranceway, and from there out in the plains. He began his long trek for the exit of the castle, taking step after step as his mind took the welcomed moment of peace to just stay at ease.

Lazy thoughts about the days to come stood primly in his head, especially concerning the other roommates who had yet to arrive. It had been but the first day of school, and some wouldn't arrive until later, depending on previous obligations or things like that. People couldn't simply apparate to the place after all, so all they could do was take the ship when it came around their ports. It would take a while, and till then he was glad that at least Elmo wasn't snoring.

He was too much used to sleeping alone, either in the room of requirements or the chambers of secrets that he was deeply relieved to find out that beyond sharing a sort of common entrance to the room and the bathroom, all bedrooms were separated by walls and doors. Of course that meant there actually wasn't a common room, and for studying one really had to use either an empty classroom, which were surprisingly few and usually just for an hour, or the library. The study hall was another option too, and since there was one per floor it was also the most apt.

The last floor of the castle was reserved for the professors, and Heinrich had yet to visit it, not that he would unless there was something that required him to do so. He had yet to use the Invisibility cloak to begin with, and with nothing else to do of particular, it suited him just fine. He could live with this normality, or this fake normality that hid something beneath its face.

Now, halfway through the plain he trudged out of the walked upon ground, taking out his invisibility cloak and unfolding it carefully. He prepared it as if to catch a bull before then, carefully, whistling sharply. With a sharp cracking noise Sophie appeared from nowhere, her wings spanning up wide as she softly crooned for a second, before jerking in surprise as the invisibility cloak was dropped on her.

An invisible and pissed phoenix on his shoulder later, he departed from the spot as fast as he could. On his way back to the castle, he passed by a group of Praefectus led by a professor who were probably heading off to investigate why the wards had apparently pinged in that spot. He did his best to let his face sport the most of

innocence available, as he uneasily reached for his room and opened the door to his bedroom, closing it behind him once he was inside.

Sophie sharply pecked him on the side of the face while making small shrills of displeasure, having been 'manhandled' in such a way not being on top of the list of the things she liked. He meekly and gently let her glide down on his bed, before sitting next to it and starting to pet the phoenix's head.

"Sorry about that." He whispered, "But I kind of needed your services, and I couldn't trust Gellert or anyone else." Sophie looked at him for a moment, before nodding and puffing her chest out.

"I need a book on Occlumency," he began hesitantly, "If I write a letter to a bookshop, would you terribly mind going back and forth until I get one? I'd use Machiavelli but I don't trust Gellert not to have done something to that bird, and at least I know you're not in any danger if you keep the Invisibility cloak on."

"Chirp." The phoenix deadpanned.

"Well yes, I'm sure it fits you."

"Chirp." Sophie added again with the very same tone of before.

"Well, maybe it's not comfortable but..."

"Chirp. Chirp."

"What do you mean with that?"

"Chirp."

"You would ping the wards though."

"Chirp!"

"Appearing in the Chamber of Secrets wouldn't warn the Headmaster? Are you sure?"

"Chirp, Chirp, Chir-Chirp!"

"All right: go with the cloak...it should hide you from the wards here at Durmstrang I suppose."

"Chirp." Sophie gently said, before hopping over his shoulder, still hidden by the cloak now folded around the bird in question. He couldn't see her, but he definitively could feel her weight. He mumbled his acknowledgment and walked out of the room again, this time heading off towards the dining hall, where the vast majority of students were present. If the cloak didn't work, at least they wouldn't know who among the students had an animal able to bypass the wards of Durmstrang.

As he entered the hall, the phoenix' weight disappeared from his shoulder. He sighed in relief as he sat down to eat, glad that nobody realized that just mere instants before a legendary animal had been among them. He just wondered where Sophie would get a book on Occlumency at Hogwarts. She wouldn't steal from the Headmaster now, would she?

Shrugging the thought off, he feasted on steamed vegetables and beef as the rest of the students, who were late due to extra-curricular activities, entered the hall and occupied the remaining tables. Every two weeks the students in charge of the kitchen would swap with those of another year. The first years were exempted, but they did have to follow a cooking course before the start of the second year.

"Heinrich!" Elmo exclaimed, sitting down near him with a dark red haired boy following him like a shadow. "This here is Thomas, our third roommate." The Italian boy explained, making the presentations. He smiled and nodded back to the teen that seemed to have fairly white skin and dark brown eyes. He also sported freckles and buckteeth with braces on. He had to be muggle-born, that much he immediately thought of, since Purebloods generally did not use braces, for they didn't even know of their existence.

"Hello." The boy said softly, his hand extending with long pale fingers that Heinrich shook back, before Thomas sat down next to Elmo. "Never saw you before."

"I'm a transfer from Beauxbatons." Heinrich replied swiftly, as Thomas merely nodded back and returned to his food.

"I can't wait for the Seamanship course to start," Elmo commented, "The real part of it of course. Pity it's later during the year that we begin the mock battles."

"What's the fun in getting drenched in water to the bone, I'll never know." Thomas murmured back, shaking his head slowly as he began to eat. Elmo rambled on for a good while about the pleasures of the sea and the smell of gunpowder when he was finally silenced by the amount of food he had dropped on his plate. Heinrich sighed and returned to drink slowly his water from the cup. Speaking of cups, he still had that potentially lethal artifact that his 'mother' had gifted him in his trunk.

The marauder map too...well, he wouldn't have a use for the map again, so maybe it was time to deliver it back? He'd ask Sophie to make another round at Hogwarts to give it back, since he doubted it would work in Durmstrang. He'd try just to be sure of course, but...to whom? He hadn't actually even tried to find out who the owner of the map was, so...to whom could he gift it?

Later that night, under the light of his wand with the Heliopath core, he slowly unfolded the Marauder's map on his lap. Carefully his wand travelled through all of the map's surface, and as he turned it around once more, a message appeared.

"Mr. Padfoot would like to know who's touching the map."

"Mr. Moony would beg whoever has the map not to bring it back to Filch."

"Mr. Wormtail quotes what Mr. Padfoot and Mr. Moony have said."

"Mr. Prongs would like to know why this is not Hogwarts and how the map ended up elsewhere."

He blinked at the words, before slowly turning around to grab his ball pen to write on the map.

"I'm Harry. I'm in Durmstrang."

"Mr. Padfoot is appalled. How the hell did we end up in Durmstrang!?"

"Mr. Moony is most saddened by the lack of manners of Mr. Padfoot."

"Mr. Wormtail kindly asks not to be subjected to a dark curse."

"Mr. Prongs would like to know Harry's surname."

Heinrich bit his lip. What surname could he use? Scamander? Grindelwald? Prince? Dursley?

"Dursley. I'm Harry Dursley."

"Mr. Prongs doesn't remember a Dursley in Gryffindor."

"Mr. Moony would like to make present that Mr. Dursley is of Durmstrang."

"Mr. Padfoot is at a loss: the map works only with Hogwarts."

"Mr. Wormtail would like to suggest to Mr. Dursley to bring the map back to Hogwarts."

He hummed slightly, as he wrote back.

"To who?"

"Mr. Prongs says that if he can bring this back to the attention of a Potter, it would be good."

"Mr. Moony claims that if a certain Lupin is teaching something, it would be fine."

"Mr. Padfoot would like to point out how boring it is to become a teacher to Mr. Moony, and adds that if the map is sent back to House Black, to the most dashing Sirius Black, then all would be fine."

"Mr. Wormtail points out that if a certain Pettigrew is still alive, his address is the same as that of his mother."

He blinked. Heinrich looked at the map carefully. A friend had given him the map? No. The map had been gifted to him by...either his father or his sister possibly, or maybe even the Flying professor.

They probably thought that guilt-tripping with gifts would have worked in bringing him back into the family, or something like that. Or maybe it had been Lillian's idea. He didn't actually know but considering what the map was saying...

"Are you sentient?" He finally asked the map.

"Mr. Prongs would like to say yes, but the answer is no."

"Mr. Moony would like to claim the charms would have held a memory, if someone hadn't been writing big."

"Mr. Padfoot points out that Mr. Moony has no idea of what being stylish means."

"Mr. Wormtail hopes never to see Mr. Padfoot being stylish."

"I need to deliver a message to the one I want to give the map to, can I write on here?"

"Mr. Prongs see no harms in this."

"Mr. Moony nods his understanding."

"Mr. Padfoot confirms."

"Mr. Wormtail quotes those above."

Calmly and methodically, Heinrich Grindelwald began to write, the ink disappearing as soon as he was writing until he was done, when a final message appeared to confirm it had been understood.

"Mr. Prongs will deliver the message."

"Mr. Moony claims the message is quite big."

"Mr. Padfoot despairs about the length of the message."

"Mr. Wormtail is saddened by it."

Carefully he folded the parchment, before dropping it on the bed-desk. The next morning, he'd send Machiavelli on his delivery route. He dared Gellert to find out.

James Potter

"And today, we shall delve in boggarts." He spoke clearly to the attentive class of the third year, his daughter in the first rows staring back at him with his very own eyes. She had rings around them however, a clear sign that his baby girl wasn't sleeping at all comfortably. She was probably still under stress from her brother's actions, and with the Dementors patrolling around the outskirts of the castle...

He walked briskly towards the shaking cabinet to the side of the classroom, the students' eyes looking at him and the wooden trembling furniture with curiosity and a bit of apprehension. He smiled back at them reassuringly, before tapping gently with his hand on the wooden front panel.

"A boggart has no fixed form, but it immediately becomes what the person in front of him fears the most. The myths concerning the boogeymen came from this magical creature making its favorite spots in old furniture and beneath beds. Nobody knows what its real form is, but the incantation to take care of it is straightforward. 'Riddikulus' must be said clearly as you concentrate on what would make your fear look amusing." He slowly unlocked the cabinet, smiling slightly at the scene of the students twitching.

"The wand movements are on the chalkboard. Any volunteer wishes to go first?" He asked to the room, expecting already Hermione to stand up with her hand...and then mentally berating himself. The girl wasn't there to begin with. There wasn't even her empty desk to remember her by to begin with, the *Damnatio Memoriae* removing everything that could have belonged to the girl or had been used by the girl.

He was surprised when his own daughter raised her hand.

"Lillian?"

"I'd like to try professor." She said clearly, standing up as he nodded to her.

"Now, remember: Riddikulus and concentrate. Imagine Voldemort with...neon pink skin and electric blue hair." He added, hoping to

give her a hand as he could hear the snorting from the classroom as the other students imagined the scene to be. Lillian nodded and prepared his wand.

The next instant, he removed the last charm from the cabinet, whose door swung open...and Harry emerged from there. The boy was wearing his Hogwarts robes, but they looked singed, burned and torn as if he had fought just recently against something.

"Well, well, well." The boy stated, his voice silky as he inclined its head to the side, "Look what we have here. My darling sister," Harry chuckled grimly. His eyes weren't green, but deep crimson red. "I wonder: how does it feel to take away what others have worked so hard for? How does it feel that your actions brought forth the destruction of my dreams? How does it feel to have torn apart the unity of Hogwarts with your own hands!? Are you enjoying this, Lillian? Are you enjoying the hate that now runs deep within these very walls because of your actions!? ANSWER ME LILLIAN POTTER, ARE YOU HAPPY NOW!?"

He was too stunned to move, and because of that, Harry-Boggart turned his gaze around the classroom with a slight smirk.

"How amusing, that you all fear a side of me. Isn't it wonderful? You all fear what I can be. You all fear what I was. You're moths attracted to my flame! Well then, burn! Isn't that what you wish of me, Lillian? To see me dead or killed, as long as I'm away from your precious family? Isn't this your fear, your fright, to be forever forgotten and cast away...just like I was?" The Boggart with Harry's face was now smiling with a feral display of teeth.

"Wonderful..." He took a step forward, towards Lillian, and James knew he had to act.

"Riddikulus!" The spell parted and hit the Boggart, who suddenly turned around, his eyes green and a small smile on his face.

"I forgive you."

A banishing charm was the next thing in James' mind, soon followed by the charm to close the cabinet and lock it back up. As he turned to look at Lillian, his heart leaped to his throat. The girl was pale,

trembling and crying as she looked ready to dart away if only shock wasn't getting the better of her holding her still on the spot.

"Lillian..."

And then his daughter ran, out of the classroom, without stopping or even caring if there was still a lesson. She simply ran closing the door behind her with a strong slamming noise. He looked at the rest of classroom, all white as sheets, and all now clearly fearing something quite different than usual.

"Lesson's over." He said carefully, "Study the Riddikulus spell."

Then, he darted off too. He had a daughter to catch after all.

Author's notes

A lot of students have as a boggart Voldemort. Now a Harry-Second coming of Voldemort is the common voice around Hogwarts, thus the Boggart practically feasted on them all.

Lillian's worst fear is for her brother to both hate her and have her abandoned by everyone else.

And to whoever didn't catch the anachronism beforehand: yes, the pocket watch of Salazar isn't an anachronism...because it isn't of Salazar. Maybe. Who knows?

I find it funny how some people actually whined about putting Starcraft as just a small 'filler' in the first few lines of the first chapter and immediately began their righteous crusade on anachronism. I mean, really? I explain it in the author's notes of chapter three, I think, that I know about it. Sheesh, if we want to be that much specific, then what are we writing Fantasy Fanfiction stories for if not to have some things happen differently? Why not just accept it as it is? It's not like I gave plasma guns to the British cops now, did I?

Remember that what Heinrich thinks is not usually what it may be. The map was gifted to him by Narcissa ('a friend'), who stole it when she obliviated Lillian, (who was surprised by her name popping up on the map) On the other hand Heinrich easily thinks it was either his sister or his parents who did so.

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 10

Smoke, why was it always thick black smoke that greeted his eyes every time he opened them? Why did his eyes have to see the ruins of a village, the destruction of everything he loved and cherished? He knew that asking questions upon questions would lead him to have no answers, and yet asking questions was his nature. It was the nature of a human being after all. Was he even human to begin with? He didn't know, but he knew what he had to do.

His chest heaved shakily, the wound still fresh, the betrayal even more. Betrayals upon betrayals; willed or not did not matter. It still hurt. It always hurt. The clouds lazily spun circles in the bright blue sky that hung on his head like a soft blanket of cold fresh air. He was flying now, flying way over the clouds and towards the sun. Ah, if only the ancient Icarus had known how to fly without wings. If only he knew what he could never have, would he have gone mad? Yet all stories hold always a piece of truth, so precious and so well hidden that nobody ever deserves to see it.

Would he deserve the truth? The solution to his problems? Was he to ever find peace in exile, or was he to be killed? He did not know, but he knew more than most.

For he was Salazar Slytherin, and as he landed near a lake to quench his thirst, his green eyes settled on the reflection that the water was giving onto him. His dirty dark hair and green eyes stared back at him with defiance, and yet so much different from what he had last seen in the mirror. Robes he wore of strange facture and form, a pale face, haunted eyes that still were nothing compared to his.

Gently he touched the surface of the lake's water, and ever so gently the ripples destroyed the image, giving back his own.

Heinrich awoke with a scream, touching his face and his arms first, before jerking his entire body out of the bed and towards the bathroom. He had to make sure it had been a dream. He had to make sure it was all but a by-product of the food poisoning of the second years. He had to make sure...and yet the pocket watch

ticked nefariously within his pocket, the minutes showing clearly a quarter to four in the morning.

He hesitated as he grabbed the clock and then looked at the toilet. Could he flush the thing down the drain? Could he smash it down the drain and destroy it? He blinked, wearily emptying the contents of his stomach in the drain as his eyes looked back at him from the mirror's reflection. They were green. Green? Weren't the contacts blue? Had he lost them in...Green eyes and grey hair looked at him, a small goatee on the face of a wizened old wizard that seemed to be lost in thought.

A delicate motion of the old wizard's hand, and then the mirror cracked and rippled, before repairing itself a second later. There were no signs of the wizard in question now, Heinrich's reflection the only thing he could see of himself. Carefully tugging the pocket watch back in its place, he washed his face to wipe out the remains of sleep from his heavy eye-lids.

He chuckled grimly and shook his head. Was he finally losing the last vestige of his sanity to the absolute chaos that was madness? Were his nerves shaking and breaking, the stress taking its final toll upon him? Hallucinations, he had thought they were but the product of an excess of Crucio, and yet here he was seeing strange figures in the mirror that seemed to haunt him in his dreams.

He didn't know if there was a bit of truth within his dreams, or if he was just going mad with some sort of psychopathic second personality, but he knew that out of everything, at least his insanity seemed to be following a specific line. He always dreamed of being Salazar, or he acted like him, sometimes going as far as referring like him while thinking. The clicking of the pocket watch had begun to grow quite uncomfortable, and he had started to fold it around a thick wool piece of cloth to keep the noise out.

How could the others just not hear it? It was nearly deafening, sort of like that horror story with the revealing heart of Edgar Poe; it had to be the nerves probably. He walked out of the room without much of a purpose. Some people were already up and about, and since waking up at four in the morning was perfectly acceptable, he was not infringing any curfew law.

The dining hall was empty, but as he sat there mulling over what he had dreamed of and what he had thought about, food appeared on his plate. The House elves were probably taking shifts to provide food as always. The first time he had been in the kitchens, for his turn together with the other third years, he had expected house elves just like those of Hogwarts. He had been surprised to find out that the ones of Durmstrang were furred, and resembled sort of hairy Gremlins. Their servitude was the same however, and he like many other students had done little more than setting the plates around the tables while eating sandwiches.

"Awake so early, Mr. Prince?" A voice asked with a low murmur. His eyes travelled to the half-closed ones of Nina Morov, the Astronomy professor. The woman had short blond hair, casket-cut with blue eyes. She was extremely lithe, as if she was but a skeleton covered in just few inches of skin.

"Yes professor." He replied in a low voice. There was no need to yell, and considering the hour it felt more appropriate to whisper and murmur, than to speak out loud.

"I was looking at the stars tonight, lost track of time I'm afraid." The woman chuckled, "What brought you out of your room so early? Are you late with your homework?"

"No," he answered while slowly shaking his head, "I just woke up...and I never manage to go back to sleep after I wake up."

"Ah, I see." The professor smiled warmly as she nodded, "Well then, let me tell you that a healthy dose of chamomile does wonders to solve that particular problem." She giggled, albeit it sounded out more like a rasp laugh as it slowly turned into a small fit of coughing. "Excuse me." She mumbled, before walking over to the staff table to sit down and get her own breakfast.

He watched the astronomy professor go with a sort of sad aftertaste in his throat. There were rumors the woman wouldn't last more than a few months into the year, something about an incurable genetic disease of sorts that magic couldn't fix. It was just a reminder like any other that some things in the world are simply impossible to repair. He finished his breakfast quietly, before waving a silent goodbye to the astronomy professor.

Out of the dining hall, he began to briskly walk towards the study hall. There was nothing else to do but kill time in there at least, since going outside in the cold wasn't smart, what with the month being already the late September and the storm surrounding Durmstrang bringing with its wind sleet throughout that day. Some days it rained also on the castle and its surroundings, probably to keep the plants around the outer gardens watered. Even the climate of the inner lake could be fixed, making for some very impressive naval battles with the correct weather.

"Yest' palaty gotovy?"

"Zhertvy byli vybrany."

"Kogda i kak?"

"Tishina, ya uslyshal, kak kto-to!"

Heinrich heard the soft whispers stop as he entered the study room, only to find that a few Praefectus were talking with a Gubernator in the corner. They looked at him with surprise, before one of the Praefectus asked with a gruff and angry voice.

"Why are you not in bed?"

"S...Sorry, just...wanted to get ahead with the studies."

"You should..." Another Praefectus began with a nasty expression on his face, only for the Gubernator to stop the boy by placing a hand on his shoulder and shaking his head.

"Now! We all friends here, students, yes? Studying lots is good! Keep this up, yes." The boy with the golden strips then left first, soon followed by the rest of the Praefectus, some still muttering in their native tongue. Even though it was a rule to speak only in English, apparently Praefectus and Gubernators were excused from it. Heinrich didn't much worry about it: maybe they were just speaking to themselves about girlfriends or things like that.

He comfortably settled himself against the wall with a chair, closing his eyes and trying to clean his mind out of any thought. He had to be calm to begin the next step after all. It could take him years before being ready, the book had said. Children's minds could be

positively stunted if they learned Occlumency earlier, their emotions not being able to be properly rationalized with their ever growing brains. Yet this was a matter of life and death, and he didn't want to test his watch's powers or lack of them.

He was still debating keeping his watch on him, but what choice did he have? The only thing he could hope for was that the wards of Durmstrang would keep disrupting whatever possible tracking charm the watch could have, if it had any, and wait until the right moment to hand it over to someone else in order to muddy his tracks.

He tried once more to clear his brain of thoughts, concentrating only on the cool cold surface of the stone wall his body was against. He began to slow down his breathing after a while, calmly starting to forget about his surroundings as he imagined himself to be floating in a dark, void filled space. Thoughts left him and questions disappeared, as he could hear the beating of his own heart...and the tick-tack of the clock.

The pocket watch ticked and tacked without remorse, pounding into his skull as he gritted his teeth in frustration. The more he tried to cut the sound off, the more it came to him strong and harsh. It was as if it was connected directly to his brain, making the same repetitive noise every single second, with one more adding every minute and one more yet again every single hour. In the pitch black darkness of his closed eyes, however, the clock did not stop ticking.

Small filaments of smoke appeared at the edge of his vision. Specifically, the tendrils appeared to be at the edge of his closed eyes, probably dreamed or imagined things that weren't meant to be there, if he successfully managed to empty his mind. Calmly he set about to control his thoughts once more, but the smoke did not disappear. It billowed and increased slowly in size. He was curious now. Ever so slowly he concentrated on the smoke, white, grey and black, twisting and increasing in size.

Sometimes figures seemed to appear in the mist, humanoid, beastly, fangs and wings unfolding greeted him with their snapping sounds as he looked around. Now his entire body seemed lost within the fog-like substance that suddenly felt as thick as tar, slugging his body down as he kept on trying to breathe and to move, and yet he could not. Was someone holding him still now? With a loud pop sound, he found himself face first on the ground of the study hall,

alone as the sun had now risen to probably six o'clock or seven in the morning. Had he fallen asleep on the chair?

He turned to gaze at the wall and slowly stood up, biting his lip as he could see the imprint of his back against the stone surface. Small drops of water had concentrated on where his back had settled against the wall, evaporating now ever so slowly in thin filament of mist. He breathed and small clouds of hot air emerged from his mouth, as if the temperature around him had suddenly lowered itself a long deal.

His right hand lifted itself, just as he left did too. Yet he hadn't been the one to lift it, had he? He had only moved his right one, so why was the left arm bending, to have his left hand touch his chin, his body, and then move towards his wand arm?

"Wh..." And then his arm went limp, as he realized he had been breathing in and out hard, his entire body quaking and convulsing from the sheer fright that was not being in control. Something was wrong with him, he knew it. And the damn clock still ticked! Tick-Tack, the clock in his pocket went. Tick-Tack, to hell he was meant. Tick-Tack, he knew not who he was. Tick-Tack, what was the cause?

"Get off me!" He basically screeched, running out of the room as fast as he could. Tick-Tack. Tick-Tack.

Tick-Tack.

"Have I gone mad?" He asked. "Is this it?"

"Tick-Tack..." He whispered to himself, "The clock ticks and cannot stop. The hands are moving for the pot. There is truth and there is power, but all you seek...is the clock tower." Peeves? Peeves knew something! He knew something from the very start didn't he!? Was this...was this some sort of trick from him? He had to get rid of the watch! He had to remove it and be without it...but if he did, then would he manage only with what he had learned that far? No.

He wouldn't. He needed help, but with whom could he speak? Jean? The girl had practically dropped out of his radar after he had given her the cold shoulder for a while. It was better that way, wasn't it? No matter how it was put, everything circled around him and him

alone, to hold her at distance was best. Just like everyone else...he was a walking target for strife after all. He stopped running next to the giant canvas of Durmstrang's entire complex. The subtle jab at the Deathly Hallows angered him for no apparent reason. His hand went to literally rip the canvas in pieces, but stopped halfway, retracting it in mid-air.

No. This wouldn't do. Falling prey to hysterics wouldn't help. Whatever it was, Occlumency seemed to worsen it. He would have to go without. He would have to find another way...and the clock still ticked! The accursed clock...but he couldn't let it go now, could he? He needed it.

Slowly, he began to think straight again: he'd go to his lessons, as always, he'd do things, normal things, as always. He'd ignore it. This never happened. This would never happen again. He could be normal, couldn't he? Yes. He could. He was just a kid. A child. A teen. He was no hero. He was but a braggart who spoke loud words with no consequences. He was not some sort of reincarnated Salazar or second Voldemort. He was Harry. He was not the King. He was Harry.

Just Harry.

Lillian Potter

A small hybridized with a chicken owl arrived hooting in the morning, as she was sitting down for her breakfast. She looked at the thing in question deliberately landing on her lap, while holding a sort of map in her beak. The creature's feathers looked a bit scruff, yet the glare the creature seemed to give was one of deep pride, as if she had just battled demons to deliver the message in question. Considering the Dementors outside the castle, that was probably the case.

"Isn't this..." She murmured in surprise, grabbing a hold of the map within the owl's beak. It was the marauder's map! The map her father had given her when she had started Hogwarts, and now it was hers once more! She ignored the fact the owl was positively eating her breakfast as if his life depended on it, but seeing the thing actually feast through all the available bread crumbs at the table kind of made her snicker. Ron's face was positively perplexed too. The owl did seem hungry after all.

"Machiavelli!" The exclamation suddenly silenced the dining hall, as everyone turned to stare at a Ravenclaw seventh year stand up, and walk briskly closer to the Gryffindor table. "What the hell are you doing here!?"

"Hoot." The hybrid replied, flapping his wings before hovering over to the Ravenclaw table.

"You know the owner of the owl?" Lillian asked immediately, hiding the marauder's map in her robes as she looked up to see the face of the Seventh year Ravenclaw suddenly tense and avert his gaze.

"Yeah." The older student replied, taking a few steps back, "It's your brother's owl after all."

The silence was now no longer the curious one of people watching for an event to unfold. It was the tense silence that came before chaos. She quietly took a small breath, trying her best to take the notion in stride. Her brother had sent back to her the Marauder's map. Had he taken it? If...If he had taken the map, had he also claimed the invisibility cloak? Still, why give back the map?

Probably her brother didn't need it, considering he wasn't at Hogwarts any longer. But then why would he deliver it back to her? Was it some sort of gift or warning? What if the object was cursed or...

"Lillian! Did your brother write you anything?" Her father's voice interrupted her from thinking longer, as she hesitantly shook her head: she had reacted on instinct more than anything else. Her father was now standing next to her, her mother on the other side. "Why is his owl here then?" Her father asked quietly, probably more a murmured thought than an actual question.

"James..." Her mother whispered, suddenly paling, "You know owls...They're really smart animals."

"That one looks like an interbred pureblood." James retorted, pointing his finger at where the owl in question was splashing juice everywhere while washing her feathers. "No offense meant of course." The man added hastily seeing the look coming from Ron, who merely snorted back.

She just bit her lip, maybe she should tell the truth, but...Harry had given her the marauder's map. What if there was a message meant for her to receive? Could she trust it...they were her parents! Of course she could trust her parents to do the right thing.

"He could be dead." Lily murmured, and that stopped her words from coming out of her mouth. "Owls...they're smart. If their owner dies...they go to where they know they can find food. If he's come to Hogwarts...you know he would never..." Her mother hastily turned around and walked away briskly, but still she saw the tears in her eyes, and that stopped her from speaking. Her father looked at her for a moment, making an awry face before whispering quietly.

"That's just a theory Lillian." And then he hastily left too, probably running behind her mother, just like he did with her.

"So he's dead?" Ron exclaimed a few seconds later, tact being anything but his name. "Your brother's dead? Seems he chose the wrong side after all."

She gritted her teeth. Her brother hadn't chosen a side at all! Her brother had been used by Voldemort, possessed by him, Imperiused by him! Her brother was not evil, and he was not dead! She was about to scream at Ron to shut the hell up, when another voice rang in the dining hall.

"Just like you've chose the wrong school Weasley! You should've gone to Charm school!" The sneering comment came from the Hufflepuff table, which was closer to the Gryffindor one. Justin Flinch-Fletchley stood up pointing his finger at the red haired boy, before adding. "Shame on you I suppose, lying about your age and all!"

It took a moment for the insult to be understood, but when it was Ron turned red, before standing up wand in hand and ready to yell back at the Hufflepuff boy.

"Say that to my face you bloody git!"

"Mr. Weasley! Mr. Flinch-Fletchley!" McGonagall exclaimed, "Both of you sit down: five points from each of you, I will not tolerate this behavior in school! You should all..."

"We knew you were on our side Professor!" Draco piped in with a bright smile, interrupting the deputy headmistress from saying anything more, "Unity at Hogwarts! Long live the King!"

"Long Live the King!" The Slytherin table chorused a few seconds later, clapping hands together with a few Ravenclaws who joined in a few seconds later. The Deputy Headmistress was flabbergasted. Lillian could see the old woman merely open her mouth, close it, and then sit down in shock while Severus Snape stood up coughing, before muttering.

"Five points to Slytherin and Ravenclaw for displaying between house unity."

Then professor Snape sat back down, leaving her to look with her mouth hanging at the scene. It was but an instant, but she could swear she had seen the potion's master blink an eye at Draco, who in turn smiled and gave a thumb up to Justin...

They had staged the entire thing.

The owl...had it been sent by her brother just for that? Was it nothing but a prop thing placed only to make her feel bad? Had she been used for his purposes? She didn't know what to think, maybe all those gestures were just casual, and there wasn't really a plan behind it all, but it just seemed staged...as if it had been thought all along.

She could dilly-dally no longer: she'd talk with Neville as soon as possible.

She had to fight fire with fire after all. She would look at the map later, hoping her brother hadn't just delivered to her an empty parchment that resembled the marauder map but wasn't it.

Jean Gregorovitch

She was worried. They had given her a nice golden patch to wear on her shoulder because of her extreme successes in the field of 'Infiltration in Muggle Society'. The course was kind of easy considering she had muggle parents, but it wasn't cheating because this was the wizards' side of the coin, not the muggle one. When she

had told of her parents to the professor, a nice and kind grey haired lady by the name of Brunhilde, the woman had been all smiles and had offered her the so called 'first place patch'. As long as her grades remained the highest, she would have at the end of the year the chance of becoming a Praefectus.

She would uphold the law in school and even receive a stipend for it to boot! The Praefectus and the Gubernator were apparently paid a few sickles to renounce some of their electives to have free time and wander around the school, making sure the students of the lower years did no follies. When she had told Brigitte, the girl had made an awkward sort of face.

Apparently being muggleborn was still subjected to some distaste around Durmstrang, but with the internationality that came with being a sailing ship and the various people always aboard, it was far less worrisome. Having given birth to Gellert Grindelwald's startling reign of terror against Muggles furthermore, it was kept under a close scrutiny by more than a few international organizations. She had poured on the books concerning the history of Durmstrang, and had come out of it positively refreshed.

There was a contingent of wizard policemen taken internationally from the ICW to settle on rotation every time the ship left a port. Being unplottable and warded it risked 'dropping off the radars' if there wasn't at least a mean to reach it in some way or some wayward type of communication available. The contingent had been chosen soon after the nineteen forty-six, and held an American, French and English mixture of auras at all times.

Which kind of gave sense to the fact Gellert had made her and Harry learn how to change their appearances with Transfiguration, rather than just charm the entire thing. She did like the long raven hair though, far easier to take care of than when she had it all bushy and wild. One of her roommates was ironically sporting her old hair style. The girl was always in the library studying, just like she had once done, and didn't seem to fit in with anyone else.

She clearly wore hand-me-downs and seemed to be at Durmstrang because of some sort of Scholarship, because she did all she could to hold her grades as high as possible. She had just gotten her name out of her, 'Hilda'. Had she been like that too in the first years?

Just how had Lillian managed to befriend her, when this girl did her best to snap back at whoever walked near her?

Jean looked with a sad frown at Brigitte talking to their latest roommate, having just arrived with the last ship as September began to close and leave space to October. Gertrude Fortuyn came from a rich family, the way her clothes radiated wealth and her accessories meant money was easy to see. She felt rather like the third wheel every time Gertrude and Brigitte began to talk about fashion and the likes. How could she speak when she knew nothing of wizardry fashion to begin with? She didn't even have the money to 'get in the group' to begin with: she half suspected Gellert had merely taken the stuff they needed from the Headmaster, rather than go and buy it in a shop.

It was in moments like these that she thought about her future. Sure, she was no longer in Azkaban now, but was she doing the right thing by lying to the international police? She just had to reach for the Iceberg with the last years and the update courses. She just had to ask an American or a French wizard for asylum in their countries. Then she could get a proper trial somewhere else, maybe more modern and with better laws against people who suffered from Imperius.

She didn't know why she had actually been following this mad run with a psychotic Grindelwald who truly believed muggles to be inferior to him. It wasn't true. People were all equal and worthy of being treated in the same way. There just had to be some type of words she could say to convince the man to see the problems in his reasoning.

She sighed as she realized she really had to talk with Heinrich. He had known the man for far longer than her. He would know what Gellert wanted with her, could contact him and ask if it was possible for her to get into an eye-witness protection in America. As she began to formulate a plan, she came up with the immediate problem: she would have to admit having escaped from Azkaban because of Heinrich and Gellert's help. If she did that, then they would know that Nurmengard wasn't actually keeping the man imprisoned.

So she was actually imprisoned, unless she convinced Heinrich to come with her. Would he, however? What did she know of the boy

after all? All that she had was her first year, and his actions hadn't been the most charming at all...but he had saved her, hadn't he? He had been the reason for her not being kissed. He had...An image flashed into her mind, of the executioner, the axe, and Heinrich's wand out. The form of fog that made him look like a Dementor or some sort of demon from some horror story...and yet, yet that particular demon had saved her.

The execution had been halted with the death of the executioner, and the Dementors themselves had left them alone, not pursuing them outside. She trembled as her hands rested on her notes on Ancient Spells, near those on History and the others...How had she forgotten something like that? Heinrich had killed a guard from Azkaban! That...Murder wasn't going to be forgiven! Surely he would have some sort of...of extenuating circumstance but he would not be forgiven...

Now that she thought about that, her mind went back to just what courses Heinrich had chosen...the same as Grindelwald. The boy hadn't saved her just for pity's sake. The realization hit her like a ton of bricks, and left her to calmly gulp down her nervousness as she settled her notes in an orderly fashion. She had been saved to be used by the boy. There...there was going to be another war, but if she played her cards right...then she could save herself at the very least. She had to be careful however.

Very careful.

Heinrich Grindelwald

Necromancy was overrated.

The first lessons had been about the correct usage of a shovel, both as a weapon and as a tool for gathering corpses. Many students had belched or gagged more than ounce, while the few who had stuck through it unflinching got the honor of having to carry said decomposed bodies of pigs and various animals back to the classroom. Luckily, or maybe just as intended, the classroom was after all just next to the cemetery of 'pet animals that died in strange and mysterious circumstances'. Ranging from the 'The Toad pet the son didn't want' to the 'Faithful dog who bit the student's ankles when the teacher asked it to'.

The truly gritty details of Zombies ready to devour the brains of unsuspected travelers were not what Necromancy was about. Necromancy, apparently, had to do with the correct way to identify of what a corpse had died. Be it through spells that mimicked the final spasms to mist-eyed filaments of hazy memories that could be used to see the last things a victim had seen. Actually the term 'Nekromanteía' from ancient Greek which later evolved into Necromantia meant prophecy of the dead body, divination of the dead body...analysis of the dead body.

Of course there were some pretty wicked spells to remove bones from a body without tearing the skin. A sort of Accio charm that worked only on bodies, making them vanish and reappear outside of the tissue. Sometimes there were spells to clean the corpses' bowels and sometimes instead they would learn how to cut up a stitched dog and fill it with fresh hay to make a...stuffed animal puppet.

The professor was a slightly balding man in his late fifties, and judging by the amount of oil he usually seemed to be dripping from his skin constantly, didn't wash in anything that wasn't perfume. His nose was hawk-like with two small beady eyes nearly fused in one, if not for the thin nose-line to separate them. He wore a pair of small golden glasses, and usually went from one side of the classroom to the other with a huffing noise and a walking stick. Of the few who had begun the class, only five remained, among whom Heinrich had found out Nikolai Sidorov.

The boy in question had a healthy tan and a bright smile, and looking at him was like taking a punch in the guts. You didn't expect a boy tanned and muscular to work with corpses. You expected people...people like him, like Heinrich. Tall, slim, pale and with bags under the eyes due to lack of sleep...people who held secrets and did not smile. People who would have ran away at the sight of a spell to cleanly peel off the dead skin once and that yet could now do it methodically, without even flinching.

All that death...all those corpses he had seen and helped to make.

All those innocents killed because of him, for him. All those who had trusted him, followed him. All those who had believed in him, fought with him. All dead, and yet he lived. Yet he was and would be again.

If only the boy would stop fighting back.

If only his brain could stop thinking grim thoughts.

Not yet, but soon.

Eventually, he'd have to go without the pocket watch. He knew it and yet...yet how could he separate himself from it? The Ticking sound was now quite wonderful to hear and behold. It called to him and he knew he had to answer it, but as his hands removed a dog's kidney without him batting an eyelid, his thoughts went elsewhere once more.

To a battlefield and a battle left unfinished.

To those he had left at Hogwarts.

He had to go back and close the deal.

He had to go back, and finish what he had started.

Eventually.

Author's notes

And another chapter rolls by. We move into the end of September, (soon Seamanship-more professors described since I'm doing only a few at a time in order not to 'hog' readers with OCs- Something starts to smell fishy to the reader? No? All right! Keep on reading happily then!) and the cast is getting assembled as the stage gets planned.

PS: reached 100000 hits! Hurray! More than 400 reviews and 200 favorites. Thanks guys.

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 11

Heinrich knew life wasn't fair. He knew that life would rather kick him when he was down instead of fighting him head on. He knew that, and still every now and then he hoped for some change. He hoped for something to go different, like when he had claimed Azkaban for him: that had been a good day. Now, however, this was not a good day. It angered him to always be fate's final punch-line and joke at the end of a sloppy rendition of a horrendous comical attempt.

He groaned as he lifted the heavy oar together with Elmo, moving the ship forward. They didn't give them a caravel, as Elmo had hoped. They didn't even give them a ship worthy of being called such. What they gave them was a good old Viking Karvi. The smallest of the possible available longships the Vikings used and it did kind of look having come out from a museum after analyzing it thoroughly for a while. The seats were six at the oars and two at the head of the ship, with one at the helm or 'stirring paddle that probably will break and send us crashing' at the back.

How the Karvi managed to last through the centuries was something he didn't actually want to know, but it was to be said of the Viking's seaworthiness: the ship did not sink and had a decent speed. If it weren't for the fact that the oars had to be moved manually, it would have been a pleasant thing. The low level of the ship furthermore reduced the number of areas the enemy's caravels could hit, so while it was true that on one side they had ended up with the worst possible boat, on the other they did end up with one who could most aptly avoid many of the hits.

It was a sort of balance, he supposed, that life enjoyed carving out neatly when dealing the sore hand to the losers. Yes, the hand was always a lost one, but how many aces and kings in the mix! He'd rather have a decent hand without aces though, at least once. The salt water hit him in the face as they took yet another wave, his stomach reaching for his throat as they rode the crest of the water column and then down again. The oars stood easily on attention, and yet he could already feel the blisters forming on his hands. It was all good work: more strength in the upper arms, easier to take out a wand from the holster with them thus.

There was a logic behind having wizards manually push and pull the oars against the sea's surface, or maybe it was just a bit of sadism hidden behind a thinly concealed façade of 'It's good for your physique'. He knew as the drum at the helm rung twice, meaning he had to push the oar down and hope for the turn not to be so tight to make him retch, that somehow it was kind of fun.

Elmo was making a sort of low murmured sound: 'Voga'. Every time the oar went in and they had to push it against the water, he'd say it again. Within moments he was already mimicking him, muttering the word together with the Italian boy. He winked as he saw the perplexed face of the plumb boy turn into a smiling one, and with that both renewed their efforts.

The problem with the Karvi was that it hadn't been made to hold cannons on its sides, so instead it barely held two at its head, mounted to the sides of the wooden dragon carved as the figurehead of the ship. The sails billowed under the strength of the wind, and soon they were practically skiing on the water's surface, aided by the oars. The speed was something exhilarating, just like the wind slashing against their face mixed with saltwater. The ship sailed and moved with grace along the crystal clear water of the inner lake of Durmstrang, surrounded as they were by icebergs and small strips of stone bridges that connected one iceberg to the other.

The golden rope painted in the giant rendition of Durmstrang were but bridges that connected one block of floating ice to the other, both above and below. Should they crack or be broken, he shivered at the thought of how long it would take for the entire thing to go down.

His distracting thoughts cost him a moment of hesitation when he heard the drum beat again, and as he was slightly slower than the others in raising his oar, he gasped as the thing nearly slammed into his guts. Elmo had put his considerable weight on the frame, helping in lifting it with a short grunt of effort. It probably would have sored considering the speed they were now going at. These were just practice rounds, to get everybody acclimated with their ships...or Karvi.

A few seconds later and a set of more sharp screeching sounds, whistles, announced the end of the training session. As they began to steer their ship back into the docks, his eyes settled on a menacing Caravel that was just then leaving its docks near the

seventh years' iceberg. It was massive, with its frame of a bright red color and its sails featuring what looked like a twin headed red feathered animal on it. A phoenix maybe? The ship was moving slowly, as if taking a leisurely stroll out, and yet there was something deep within that ship that made it feel...right.

"That's the Storm and Duress ship," the captain of their Karvi commented with a small bitter tone, "Only the Rex gets to be the captain of that behemoth. Luckily they don't use it for the seamanship course but only for important functions...must be breaking in some new seventh years."

Heinrich kept his mouth shut as they slowly docked and descended from the Karvi. Once the ship was empty, it began to move on its own, floating without a guide towards the side cavern, where it disappeared from sight in a few minutes.

"Very well." The Karvi Captain exclaimed, clapping his hands slightly, "My name is Alonso de Navarro, Spanish. You don't look like seamen yet, and the ship clearly isn't one of the Invencible Armada, but we can work on both of them. Maybe next year we'll be lucky and get something better." The boy shrugged. "Don't count on it though."

Heinrich wheezed out a long drawn breath he hadn't thought he was holding. He actually liked the ship. Small, without pretenses, and clearly with little to no requirements to keep working: he shuddered at the thought of what they'd be forced to do should they had been chosen for an actual caravel. Even now he was drenched in sweat and his muscles all felt cramped and sore.

"Anyway, this was good." Alonso added, "Very good. Now go shower: no cold catching on my watch. Shoo. Shoo." Their captain said with a dismissing attitude, before turning around to leave. The teen did stop for a moment however, to stare back at the inner lake with a sort of longing look. It was but a moment, and then the Spanish left.

Heinrich looked back himself, staring at the surface of the sea glittering under the light of the sun as if it was but a mirror to reflect the sky atop of it. It was something mesmerizing and beautiful, the sheer light and sparkles it emanated. It was a soothing sight, the low

rumbling of the water quieting down his thoughts as he couldn't help but keep on looking, his gaze lost in a dream like trance.

"Sea eyes," Elmo commented offhandedly, "Are the eyes of the sailors who look at the sea, after they have left its embrace." The plumb boy was apparently soaked in sweat too, but had held off waiting for him. "It's beautiful isn't it? Yes so fickle at the same time. It is vast beyond imagining, and yet so peaceful at times..." The boy's voice trailed off, before a small smile displayed on his lips, "Anyway: I'm not willing to catch a cold. Let's hit the showers."

Heinrich nodded back absentmindedly. There had been something in the reflection of the saltwater lake that had attracted him, but he couldn't quite put his finger on what it actually had been. Something in the lake called to him, but what, he could not understand. It felt sort of like a siren's call to a sailor, and as he washed himself in the warm water of the shower he realized it sort of was precisely that.

Maybe Durmstrang held mermaids? Just like Nurmengard held Inferi, Azkaban had its Dementors and Montechristo had its Vampires?

It didn't quite stick though. All the places he had been so far held dark creatures. All the fortresses he had to conquer held darkness within them, so why would Durmstrang be different? Why mermaids? He hadn't seen one of course, but something...something did worry him. He dressed up in clean robes, before heading positively famished for the dining hall.

As he sat down on the wooden bench, his thoughts occupied by food and what he would eat to fill his belly, he realized he had involuntarily sat next to a first year. The guy was a bit on the scrawny appearance, and he did sort of appear skittering enough, probably scared to death by the ghost, 'Blackbeard'. He doubted the ghost was the real Blackbeard, since the pirate had been an English one and Durmstrang wasn't actually fostering English ghosts back at the time, but still...

It wasn't the only thing strange he had seen going around. For example, some students were captains and yet still were wearing the golden insignia of the anchor, while elsewhere more and more with the passing of time second years and first years began to wear similarly fashioned golden brands. It was when he thought of it as brands that he realized something. Weren't the Jews in Germany

forced to wear golden star symbols to show their religion? For what it mattered, also many others who weren't Arians had different types of forms and colors they were forced to wear to announce 'what' they were to the world.

Yet this was a school, and the people branded didn't seem to be sharing anything particular. Durmstrang had probably just a way of selecting its future 'stars' in an eerie way for him, but that didn't mean this was actually going to turn into a labor camp after a few months now, would it? He ate quietly but quickly, leaving the room just as a second year sat down in the spot of the skittering first year.

He frowned for a moment, before shrugging it off and heading towards the study hall. He'd crank up a few more hours of studying. There was never a lack of stuff to learn after all.

Lillian Potter

"Dumbledore is Evil. Learn Occlumency. Do not look in the eyes of Dumbledore or others. Once you have learned it, the map will tell you more. Trust no-one. Believe in no-one."

She folded the map once more, taking a deep breath as she nervously walked into the restricted section. The permission slip to take prohibited books out of there, like Occlumency, had been easy to get. She just had to puppy-eye Sirius and claim it was for a prank. It had been strangely easy to get it, all with keeping everything mysterious and the likes, and now she was there for the moment of truth. If she could get the book and the book didn't scream, then everything would be fine in the world.

She just hoped Madam Pince wouldn't froth or attract attention on her book choice. She doubted Sirius would let it just go if he realized she wasn't looking for a book on pranks, but one on how to ward her mind from mental probes and attacks. She could probably try and pass it off as a mean to avoid getting discovered once the prank was done, but apparently Occlumency was restricted also by law: learning it without license was disconcerting.

The book she had first wanted to take wasn't there: her father was sorely missing it, albeit she had been looking at that cover for years since her arrival at Hogwarts, what with all the time she spent awkwardly delivering her homework to be checked by him. Thus the

need to resort to the underhanded methods to acquire it had come up, and here she was, grabbing the leather bound book of the library which slid out without making a single noise.

Good. Now she had to bring it outside without Madame Pince noticing.

She turned around and nearly screamed, because the woman was there already, eying her like she was just about to commit a terribly foolish action. The eyes of the woman literally gaze into hers, and she felt the need to faint neatly, or to just give way to the scream lodged in her throat and let it out. She quickly lowered her gaze, mentally cursing. Her brother had told her not to look in the eyes of others! She should have remembered it but now...

Maybe the librarian didn't know how to read in the mind of people, probably she wouldn't know and...maybe she had been quick enough to diver her gaze from her own?

"You have the permission slip?" The woman asked briskly, sneering as she extended her hand to see the book in question probably.

"Yes ma'am." She replied quickly, handing the slip of paper over instead of the book, "Have to run, see ya!" She feigned running to the left, and then went right. Her seeker reflexes weren't there only for show after all. With a mad dash, and with the screeching sound of Pince behind her, she emerged from the library in a hurry, not stopping until she reached for the only place she knew she would not be disturbed: the bathroom on the second floor.

She barged through the doors and hissed the command word, descending down the filth encrusted passage that led her down to where she knew stuff would be kept safe from anyone except her and her brother. She dropped the book inside a small trunk she had settled on the rock bridge, the level of water around her unchanging. Only Harry could manage to reveal the true secrets of the room...she barely managed to open the door.

She took deep breaths, calming down as she realized she had just done the exact opposite of what she had hoped to achieve. By now Madam Pince would know she had hidden something from her, and would demand an explanation. Even if she could bring the

confrontation later on, she would still need an excuse for Sirius, and then would have to bring the book back eventually.

If only she had her invisibility cloak back!

Heinrich Grindelwald

This was just to ease his nerves. He repeated the thought to himself thousands and thousands of times as he walked beneath the invisibility cloak. Sophie had just disappeared a few meters away from him in the plains surrounding the castle, and if everything went according to schedule...

"opyat' nichego!" A professor exclaimed, walking briskly to where he had been but a few minutes before. Of course he didn't know Russian or German or what language it was, but he knew it wasn't the professor he wanted to follow. His eyes settled on one of the Praefectus in charge. He had waited for the same day again, hoping the same group would be around just like the week before.

Indeed, they had answered and indeed they had followed the professor in charge once more. They were probably growing worried by now, with someone able to come and go. He began to follow behind the Gubernator, the friendly one. He didn't trust friendliness, not anymore. He didn't trust anything much in this period. It was already October...not even a month and his paranoia had been yelling at him that things were wrong.

He knew his instinct was good. He knew his instinct was the best advisor he could ever have, and he knew he was literally sitting on something bad, something evil. How he knew, or why he knew, that was something he would pay dearly to understand too. It couldn't be the ring: there were no notions outside of Hogwarts. It could be the locket maybe, or the despicable ticking watch that still hung within his breast pocket in his cloak.

Yet nobody heard it tick. He had decided to ignore the pocket watch for the moment, concentrating on the bigger of two evils. Slowly ever so he followed the group of Praefectus back into the study hall, the Gubernator throwing a few charms around before starting to speak in Russian, or whatever language it was.

The charms, if a few were meant to detect him, failed miserably. He was beneath the cloak of invisibility, one of the Deathly Hallows: there was no way puny spells could detect him. As he listened in, he knew that if they did nothing but talk he would get nowhere. He needed to learn a few languages apparently. One word however stuck through the entire conversation.

Zhertvy. They spoke about this word with a mixture of amusement and disgust at the same time. He didn't know what Zhertvy meant, but by now he had begun to realize that his paranoia was just barely wrong most of the time, and...and he felt it, the fact that it didn't mean anything good. He'd have to ask around what it meant. Well, he could ask his roommates, but that would be stupid.

He could ask Jean, but she might be busy to begin with, so there was actually no reason to disturb her...was there? No. He'd find the time to ask her tomorrow. Why wait? He might forget it during the night, better to write it down no? But he was starting to get sleepy. No, this was important. He had to remember it. Zhertvy. He had already heard that word, but where?

Where had he heard that word?

No, not where...when.

Salazar Slytherin

"So, is this what you consider modern looking, Rowena?" He had to ask, since Rowena seemed so attached to the design of some sort of sickeningly white and golden palace that was making his head ache and his stomach lurch. How could someone with such a brain and wit fathom such a monstrosity, he knew not...but he'd be damned before he'd be caught teaching anyone something in a white and gold palace. England needed stone and towers, it needed Gothic and it needed steel.

It didn't need glass windows with delicate incisions of ponies. That had to be Helga's influence. Clearly, the other woman was mad enough with her love for the badgers...didn't she know those creatures were rabid and ferocious? The small illusion of the white and golden castle disappeared in a small spark, as the woman in question pouted.

"You don't like it?" Rowena asked back, but the tone was one of the sorts that it promised pain if he said the truth of the matter...and he was cunning enough to avoid the pain.

"Well, Godric said..." He began smoothly, only for Rowena to snap up.

"Godric can take the stick he has up his ass and hit himself with it, since maybe that would make his brain start again...the idiot wouldn't know a beautifully arranged and symmetrical castle even if it was smashed against his face."

"Of course my dear, of course," he replied quickly. "But maybe you should think about what Helga would say..."

"What? She said she liked the windows!" Rowena rebuffed him, as always. Why couldn't the woman just let him finish for once? Was he asking too much to simply keep a discussion going without being interrupted while explaining just why his ideas were the best there were?

"I did not say the opposite, but does she like the walls? Didn't she want some cute...nest for her badgers?" The word 'cute' and 'nest' were the most difficult words he could pronounce. Why the madwoman couldn't take the damn tower he had reserved to her was beyond belief. Even more, why couldn't they just accept the fact that there was no need for houses? He didn't know whether to be appalled or not...but he'd correct their mistakes soon enough, oh if he would.

"Maybe you're right Sal," he grumbled at the nickname.

"Salazar. My name is Salazar and I would like it if you were to remember it." Rowena grinned, a small smile tugging on her lips. The woman was going to be the death of him. Not that it mattered much...

It was then that he looked at her naked back, lifting itself up from the bed.

No, he shouldn't be thinking about it again. This was just part of his astute plan to gain complete control of the school. There was nothing else in there.

"So, have you relented?" Rowena asked of him as she began to dress up.

"I still think that Merlin is a horrible name, but if that is your decision..."

"Of course it's my decision...and you know what? You're right: too much white and gold isn't good for a school."

Mentally, he grinned. Give a hand to grab an arm, give a body to grab a school...give an heir, and seize the world.

"Good, now about the protection wards..."

"No Salazar. On that point I'm with Helga and Godric: it's cruel, no matter how you look at it." Her voice had dropped, and this time he knew he had to be the one to relent. Well, it was just that after all...

"Alright, no Zhertvy powered wards." Maybe they'd accept his second idea to power the school wards? If you can't use the body...then go for the soul.

Basileus Sfor

"Mein NEWT Fuhrer, there iz a kid outside waiting for ya!" A fifth year of Ravenclaw mocked him, making the nonchalant gesture of a military salute as the others snickered. He smiled, but not at the joke. He remembered when he had met the real Fuhrer, Adolf Hitler, on a cold morning of the nineteen forty-three. He was at the height of his power, believing himself under the protection of god himself.

The poor man knew not of the Felix Felicis...and how a single sip at the right time had brought him there, and how repeated sips would bring him down too. Imperius, ah the curse he enjoyed the most. While it did not make him the most feared Dark Lord, it certainly helped him rise and he...he believed it was better that way. Sure, he had engineered the second world wide war, just like the first, but what did it matter in the greater scheme of things?

What indeed mattered when muggles all but needed a reason to be driven to kill one another? Muggles...such pathological beasts, that they fought because of voices, imaginary friends, imaginary

needs...that they fought for peace was particularly ironic, it was like claiming that to plant a tree you had to burn down a forest beforehand. No, he despised muggles, and his only regrets came from the wizards he had to kill...and for those he would gladly redeem himself.

Hell was not a place he wished to be condemned to.

"Jawohl mein sturmtruppen!" He replied, putting the mocking tone in his voice.

"Sturm Zauberer, angriff! Schnell! Schnell!" That he had yelled once, sending his men to scorch France under a rain of thunder and fire. He had been ferocious, so much that when he had come again, the second time around in full force, they had been easily squashed once more. There no longer was a menace in France, not since the thirties.

He walked out of the Ravenclaw door with the smiles and the laughter still echoing in the room behind him. If only they knew who they were laughing with. Was it bad taste to make Hitler-like jokes with the one who had literally brought Hitler to power? He found it deliciously ironic...just like the person who was now waiting for him outside of the door.

Lillian Potter was looking at him with a mixture of anxiousness and nervousness, both clear cut signs that something was either wrong, or that needed to be corrected. He remembered the events of a few weeks before, and maybe now he'd have to change his plans again? He doubted Heinrich had tattled his real self to the girl, but the quick jab of Legillimency told him everything he needed to know about it.

The girl quickly averted her eyes: she doubted but had no proof: how fun. If all went well over the Christmas holidays, the last day at school would truly be explosive. So Heinrich had thought of sending her a coded letter in the Marauder's map...and that map was apparently something charmed to work only for the girl. Whatever secrets the map bore were probably things like 'I'm innocent' and 'Dumbledore is Evil'. It wouldn't work, but it did work in his favor at least.

The more doubts were spread around the school on Dumbledore's silver persona of righteousness and justice, the sooner the shield of

the past war would crack, and when from a hero one was cast down back to being a mere mortal...a lot of people didn't survive the stress. Albus would do something stupid, he knew it of course, and when he would do that, he'd be ready to grab the instant. Carpe Diem. In the end, if all went along the lines he had thought of, everything would be fine.

Maybe Heinrich would probably throw a tantrum or two, but it would all work out in the end.

It was for the Greater Good after all.

"I...I wanted to know," Lillian began, hesitantly so. He could toy with the little girl a bit, but then he'd never see the end of the discussion. Better to solve the problem immediately, rather than to let it reach a point where he could no longer control it for the best.

"Yes?" He asked, gesturing for her to continue.

"Would it...Could you...I..." She took a deep breath, what did she have to be so nervous about?

"Could you train me please!?" She blurted out quickly, "Just an hour of your time is fine! Even some pointers or tips on what books to study, I would ask Hermione but she's...and I...well if you can't...I..."

He raised an eyebrow. The question didn't much shock him. He had read her mind after all, and as she looked at him with those hazel eyes, he read far more than he would ever be told from the girl in question. The desire to excel was there, wrapped tightly beneath a vine of self-doubt and self-pity. She thought herself responsible for everything that had happened to her brother, as if she could have changed anything!

But the girl was in the radar of Albus...normally, he would have refused. Too much attention from Albus was not good, and if he caught his eye directly, then it would all be over. Still this was the last year, and after the stunts he had already pulled, this one would be deliciously marvelous to pull out. The Potter siblings, both trained by the same dark wizard. Maybe he could spin it so as to appear as the good guy in search of redemption? Oh the possibilities!

Dumbledore would never see what hit him. This, this above everything else, this would his revenge! His hors d'oeuvre in cunningness! He knew the Hat had a reason for placing him in Slytherin: the poor thing was forced to sort the people beneath it and never to reveal its secrets. He still remembered fondly the moment the hat had basically screamed in his head who he was and how shocked the hat was! But he could not throw out a student, no matter how old, powerful, or how evil he or she could be.

Salazar's revenge on the school...for not screening the applicants, all could enter and none would be left out. It was a major flaw in the school's wards, a terrific one and a terrible one. All could enter willing to submit themselves to education within the classrooms once a day, be sorted, and be keyed in the wards as students.

He had walked in, just like the Horse of Troy had...and he would walk out leaving behind burning buildings and screams of the dead.

This...this was just the cherry on top of the cake.

"If you can't..." The girl added carefully, but he just smiled, he smiled like the Cheshire cat probably, but it didn't matter. It didn't matter because he'd be a fool not to accept.

"I have free time on Saturday afternoon." He replied, watching with a grin as Lillian's face morphed into one of surprise and then cheerfulness. The girl was so easy to read even without entering her mind: she had wanted to know more about her brother's time in Ravenclaw, and if anybody strange had contacted him or imperius'ed him...

The poor girl had gone to ask the wolf why her brother had big paws and big teeth. She had seen a solution and not a cause...

Who was he to spit in the face of fate's gifts?

Heinrich Grindelwald

He awoke with a startling gasp as he could feel his brain nearly been split in two by a giant pressure. He felt woozy, and as his eyes loomed over blearily to the clock, he couldn't help but groan angrily. Again? Had he been possessed again or was it some sick prank?

It was three in the morning. He didn't recall having gone to bed, or having settled the invisibility cloak on top of him. He didn't recall anything and supposedly for one who always wore the pocket watch of Salazar that was not possible. He should be able to remember everything, and he didn't remember being Obliviated. Yet he didn't remember what he had been doing before closing in to eavesdrop on the Praefectus and Gubernator students.

Something was wrong in the school, he knew that much.

It was tied to the word Zhertvy.

Now, if only he could find some sort of connection with the two things...

He pulled himself up for but a second, before crumbling back down to sleep. He felt tired, as if he had run a marathon of sorts, or lifted a heavy weight. It took him but a few more moments to realize something he hadn't thought of before.

Something was missing.

The ticking of the clock.

It had stopped.

Author's notes

And another chapter rolls by.

Don't try and look for Zhertvy on google translate. I did use it for the translations, but consider that it won't give you back the precise meaning so...who knows what you might come to understand!

And Lillian enters the maws of Basileus, while Heinrich finds himself going on his first actual bout of initiative (Had to start growing a spine eventually) and gets a massive headache as a result...but at least the clock stopped ticking.

It's a good thing no?

We hope it is.

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 12

Ancient spells spoke of Egyptian's dances of the rain. It spoke of powerful curses that could make people rot, and it spoke of plagues and devastations that could bring entire countries to their knees. Knowing that half the natural disasters in the world were the product of an old and angry wizard was particularly illuminating. The last of the French Kings was an example: the poor guy had snubbed a witch and she made sure he would pay quite drastically for the affront. Beheading him and destroying the monarchy itself...hell hath no fury like a witch's scorn.

The professor was a small plump woman with curly bronze hair, green eyes and a bright smile. Her name was Helga, albeit except for the name she had nothing else in common with the Helga Hufflepuff of Hogwarts. Professor Helga was sweetly explaining a specific ancient spell used to make the grounds unfertile, with all of its required sacrifices in order for it to work, when a question from Jean brought his wayward thoughts back on track.

"Excuse me professor, but wasn't there a ministry or something to keep an eye out for those spells back in their times?"

Jean had raised her hand to ask the question, and as the professor had nodded, she had asked. He looked once more in the direction of where Jean was. She was following the class with one of her roommate, albeit he had offered in the beginning to take it so that they could keep an eye out on each other. He shouldn't have been surprised. He was starting to believe that sometimes Gellert was right: there truly were people he shouldn't be concerned with.

"Miss Gregorovitch, I'm afraid your question is asked wrongly." The professor replied kindly, "These are not Dark Spells. These are Ancient Spells. The wizards of old did not use powerful wand cores, and to compensate they needed their own blood or that of other wizards, usually diluted with that of animals or muggles. It is for that reason that many deem blood rituals and ancient spells evil, while they are not generally such: it is only propaganda and a squeamish government."

"But this ritual here destroys the soil and kills the cattle on it. There's no way this isn't evil!" Jean insisted, only for Helga to frown.

"Miss Gregorovitch, the spell is part of the course. It might be needed for you to kill all grass in an area while looking for something that you dropped, or maybe to remove some weeds around the garden. This spell with but a drop of blood is routinely used in cleansing old and abandoned mansions of many vegetal problems." The professor continued, "How is that evil?"

"I...I'm sorry professor." Jean whispered back, lowering her shoulders as the woman merely nodded and resumed her lesson.

"Worry not Kind, it is a common mistake those fools of the continent do: magic is not evil or good. It is magic. It is in our blood, in our veins, in our souls! Magic makes us wizards, and yet it still eludes us: the spells of old are but an inch of the true might wizards once possessed. Why, the old gods themselves might have been but mere wizards! Zeus, Hades, Odin, Anubis and so on..."

The professor's words rang through the classroom with verve, as the students listened on with interest. Yet Heinrich was busier looking at it from another point of view. The old gods might have been wizards. It made sort of sense, didn't it? Zeus could transform in various things, and the gods were fickle like humans to begin with. He hadn't given much thought about what magic being real truly meant. Well actually he had, but he hadn't explored this particular avenue of thought. With magic real, were the gods really gods? Were magicians really playing tricks with their hands or were they truly wizards who lived doing said jobs? Wasn't it all a matter of perspective then? For humans, the wizards of old resembled gods and demigods, while now the wizards acted as if the 'muggles' were some sort of second rate citizen.

Dumbledore was viewed as a hero...but was he a hero? He snorted at that: the man was no hero. Even if Gellert had lied about a lot of things, all that the headmaster of Hogwarts had done to him proved without a doubt just how wicked the old man was. So maybe he was seeing this in the wrong light? Maybe not all fortresses held dark creatures. Sure, they were referred to as the three fortresses of darkness but maybe it meant 'dark' as in 'long lost' or 'old' or 'unknown to the general population' like the spells.

It didn't have to mean ancient eldritch horrors.

The lesson finished after a few more pointers on how such a spell could also be used to quickly deteriorate vegetal products, like paper and books, if overpowered in its casting. After the class was dismissed, he quietly stood up with his book bag, ready to leave, when Jean stopped him.

"We need to talk about your grandfather." She said hesitantly, in a whispered voice. He looked at her surprised: it had been a while since they had last talked, and considering just what tied them together, it couldn't mean anything good if her first words to him after weeks were about Gellert. He nodded, following her as she left the room.

"You know where the greenhouses are?" She asked him, and as he nodded back she added, "Meet me there tonight one hour before curfew." Afterwards she broke off him, heading quickly down a hallway and then disappearing behind a corner. He raised an eyebrow at such a display of secrecy, but said nothing. He did have another lesson soon after all.

Spell-Making was soon after Ancient spells, and the lessons there were actually the most boring out of the entire curriculum. He had thought that something that worked on creating stuff would be all practical. Instead as it turned out it was only theoretical knowledge up until the seventh year. The reason was sort of obvious: common sense dictated that doing a flick instead of a twist in an incantation would produce something slightly different, or maybe not work at all. The truth was that magic didn't follow common sense.

A flick instead of a twist could inherently do anything: from morphing the table to gold to destroying the eardrums of the students in the front rows or even transfigure one's own body into that of a fly. The problem was that it had happened, multiple times in a row, in the past...which was why no spell was to be actually practiced until all possible avenues had been taken into account, and it had been deemed safe enough to practice on.

Mathematics also entered the equation, just like the root of verbs and the correct intent. A spell that he had read of on his old potion book, scribbled in a corner with the words 'for enemies' next to it, was Sectumsempra. It wasn't 'Secosemper' or 'Scindoaeternum' for

a reason: the first variation was actually a curse that would keep a target being cut by various things like paper, splinters, and the likes, while the second one would separate forever two sides, without actually killing the target. Sort of like splinching after apparition.

The professor of Spell-Making was a raven haired buzz-cut man with a bulky build and quite tall, by the name of Ivan Stoyanov. His sharp sky-blue eyes were always drifting from one student to another with alacrity, to make sure nobody even dared get their hands on their wands to try and vary any spell at all. The first thing he did, actually, was ask the name of the idiot who had tried to use an untested spell during the annual Blackbeard's 'scare the firsties' event.

Heinrich had received the mother of tongue lashing for it. Worse than morphing the name of a spell was adding something to it: without knowledge of what it might do, he could have risked releasing instead of a beam of light a cloud or a wave of heat that could have sent the students to the infirmary on their first day at Durmstrang. That had been the only occasion a professor had actually lashed out against him, and somehow he didn't feel like it had been wrong: he did risk the lives of those near him, if what the professor had said was true.

Still, as he wrote upon the piece of parchment the wand motions for a slight variation of the Depulso spell, he scrunched his nose. The sweep of the wand was all that the spell required, and it worked in such a way that at the end of the sweep, whatever the wand aimed at would be thrown backwards, just like the opposite of the Accio. The variation was but to end it in a tight turning spin motion, make a clockwise turn and then pull back the wand. The result would be, technically, as if the spell had been thrown from an angle instead of the front. Done wrongly anything could happen...and Heinrich was not in the mood to try.

Finally even that lesson came to an end, and with it he stood up, once more ready to leave the classroom.

"Mr. Prince, stay for a moment." The professor spoke, his voice raspy as he gestured for him to move closer. He did so, looking hesitantly at the face of the man that portrayed no signs of either having something good to say, or something bad.

"Yes professor?" He asked, carefully trying to see through the man's features for whatever hint at what this talk would be about.

"I am sure you recall our first lesson?" He queried, unceremoniously snapping a book close.

Heinrich gulped, but nodded.

"Yes sir."

"Have you created new spells in the meantime, boy?" The man's question came smoothly, his voice appearing normal as he merely seemed curious, not angry or anything else.

"No sir." He replied quickly, maybe a bit too quickly. He actually hadn't tried, but the idea had been there. To add words, adjectives, to try and modify the root word of the spell and see if something else appeared: to try saying abracadabra or Hocus Pocus and similar spells.

"Good." The man grunted, "I heard you've got quite the edge in Offensive and Defensive spells, nearly first of the class."

"Yes sir." He replied quickly, lowering his gaze embarrassedly. He wasn't used to being praised for something so normal. It was kind of funny though: it seemed things were returning to normality, with the professor actually acting normal and no whatsoever trouble or problem at hand. If only it weren't for the prophecy, he'd say he had found his place.

"I usually make this offer to the fifth years," the man began, "but you strike me as a hardworking sort of student: would you be interested in helping out as an assistant in spell researching? Before you refuse or accept," Ivan began raising his right hand, probably to silence him from interrupting him. "Know that you would be paid seven sickles a month, would have to be available on Sunday all day long and there is a slight risk for your health in case I misjudged you and you start casting spells without proper supervision."

Heinrich blinked. He hadn't thought about getting paid to do it. He hadn't actually thought if the job was dangerous or not. He mulled the decision over for a moment, before asking.

"Why me?"

"You got lucky once with creating a spell. When push comes to shove, I'd rather have luck on my side."

That wasn't actually comforting, but still...

"All right."

"Excellent."

He had Seamanship on Saturday, spell-making assistance on Sunday and elective courses along the week...as Heinrich looked at his plate at dinner, he couldn't help but smile gingerly. This was school. Nothing was forced onto him, there was no need to train to try and avoid being offed by the headmaster. No psychopathic poltergeists and none whatsoever troubles. Maybe he's sixth sense had gone wrong for once. The school seemed so normal by now that his thoughts at the end of the previous week seemed useless. There was nothing wrong in the school at all. The corridors were not oppressing him as he walked through them, and the doors did not look dangerous at all.

The Praefectus were helpful, and the Gubernator kind.

And he felt something shiver deeply within his very own stomach telling him something was wrong. Wrong. Wrong. Completely Wrong. Utterly Wrong. Something was amiss. Something, no, someone? The clock wasn't ticking, so everything was fine. Or was it not ticking because it wasn't fine? How did the clock work to begin with?

He groaned as he began to eat quietly, the thoughts and worries leaving him as he ate in a sort of contemplative state. There was nothing wrong or was there something wrong? The school seemed to work fine. There were no mentions to dark beasts anywhere. The professors were all professional. There was an international police force on the school. The Praefectus convened to speak to one another every now and then, but that was normal, wasn't it? Every school had reunions that happened every now and then.

The golden brands were just a mean to show a student who was the best in something, not to mark down people as cattle or things like that. It was his paranoid streak that was sending him warning

signals. He finished his meal and stood up from the table. His plan was pretty much simple, and was executed without a hitch: he'd go back in his room, pull on the invisibility cloak, and then head over to the greenhouses. Better to be safe than to be sorry after all.

Beneath the cloak he sighed in relief. He was truly safe in his invisibility at the very least. The walk towards the greenhouses was uneventful, and as he rounded the corner to their entrances, he stopped coming face to face with Jean waiting patiently in front of the door in question. She was glancing to the sides, walking in small circles and moving her weight from one leg to the other, as if she had something extremely important to tell him.

He peered cautiously around her, and not seeing anything important of notice, coughed slightly. He nearly chuckled at seeing the girl jump and spin around wand in hand. Her eyes had narrowed as she was taking in her surroundings like an animal being stalked by a hunter.

"It's me." Heinrich whispered carefully. "You know the rules...don't want them to stick a Praefectus on us."

"Are you under an invisibility cloak?" Jean hissed back, "Did your grandfather give you one?"

"No." He replied sternly. "If he found out, he'd probably have a heart attack and confiscate it." He had little doubt about it. The fact he hadn't told Gellert about this particular Deathly Hallow was because it was his; his by right of conquest, of blood and of birth. Lillian could keep the marauder's map, but the Deathly Hallow was his to use as he saw fit. Maybe it was because of the myth associated with the cloak.

After all, the one who wore the cloak held it until long age, and then greeted Death like a friend. He would rather like to live until old age, maybe in a nice cottage somewhere near the sea. Still, at the moment he had something else to concentrate on, as Jean had begun to talk.

"So you hide things from your grandfather?" She asked, nervous and hesitant. There she went, biting her lip as she always did when she was nervous. Didn't she know that doing that was like being an open book to whoever knew few basic facts on facial muscles? For

what it meant, considering few wizards actually looked at the books for more than the pictures.

"I learned a long time ago not to trust everyone at face value with critical information." He muttered back. She actually recoiled as if struck, before mumbling something that seemed akin to a sorry. What did she have to be sorry about?

"What did you want to talk about?" He pressed on, seeing as she seemed lost in something, maybe self-wallowing guilt, and her eyes appeared downcast. The cold air of the winter night made his breath come out in small smoke bubbles, that seemed to coalesce if for but a second in front of him, before dispersing carried away by the wind.

"I...I don't trust your grandfather too." She whispered, "I think that...if we went to the police at the school, we could...you know, be granted asylum? We could be in America by tomorrow and..."

"And be chased by a Dark Lord who is not actually imprisoned?" Heinrich replied quietly. "And what are you going to do in America to begin with? Go to school? How long do you think it would take until Dumbledore came around to kill you?"

Jean paled as her body began to tremble.

"What? What are you...Dumbledore was trying all that he could to save me, Gellert had to have been lying to us!"

Heinrich snorted. "I wouldn't be surprised if he was the one who ordered you executed. You were sentenced for life, not for the kiss. Hadn't I been there to take you out, you would have died Jean. Do you understand me? I saved your life. Twice by now I have acted through great risk to save your life. You owe me two life debts, Jean." He muttered, as realization finally struck in.

"You owe me." He chuckled, "That's it then. No need to dilly-dallying around." He took a deep breath, and then...then he stilled. What was he going to do then? She owed him two life debts. One was enough to make people's knees jerk and buck under the strain of what they had to do to repay it. Two? Two was probably unheard of at least from the same person...would she own one to Gellert too to begin with? If she did then...she was compromised. The thought struck him as odd. Wasn't it a bit harsh to consider her compromised

because of it? He had been the one to insist on going to Azkaban, Gellert hadn't even thought about it. He had been the one to press on saving her. The debt was with him, not Gellert.

"Heinrich?" Jean muttered, frightened probably by his sudden silence, "Are you still there?"

"I'm offering you a way out." Heinrich spoke quietly, "But it's something I will do only once. My trust is not something that can be ever regained, so think about this offer well enough."

Jean looked hesitantly around, worried and scared she couldn't see just where he was. She probably thought he might attack her if she answered wrongly, and that was actually an option. He'd have to try his hand at the Obliviate spell eventually, or at Legilimency. In the end Jean nodded, and he sighed in relief. At least he wouldn't have to try it that soon.

"Dumbledore will probably want you dead to close a loose end." He began, removing the cowl of the invisibility cloak, "Just like he wanted me Obliviated and bait for Voldemort." He whispered, "Just like he always acted to get the bigger problem out of the way by sacrificing the smaller one! He was the one who ordered the secret keeper of the Potters to reveal their location to Voldemort, and guess what?" He added carefully, "Voldemort knew. He knew beforehand of Pettigrew's and Dumbledore's trap, and yet he played his hand in that way. Now tell me, Jean, why would he do that? Why would he kill himself if he knew it was a trap?"

The girl blanched, shaking her head furiously as her hands went to cover her ears. She didn't want to listen, and probably he had told her too much in too little time. Yet as he spoke the words just kept coming out one after the other.

"The answer..." He took a deep breath, "is something I don't know, Jean." He whispered, "Yet it's important. I know that much. To know the why is to understand. Without understanding the enemy, there is no hope to defeat him. I know Voldemort is an enemy, I know Dumbledore is an enemy, I don't know about Gellert or Snape or the others, but I know I can trust very few people. You've been burned too Jean. You have to understand that we have to help each other if we want to get out of this alive. So...I'm offering you my friendship, once more. Just like first year, but this time my offer is final:

tomorrow afternoon, I'll be in the library. Join me if you want to accept or don't if you don't want to. In the latter case, I call upon one of your life debts not to sell me out to the aurors or any government." He spoke slowly, but clearly.

"Do what you want with your life then," he continued, "Go to America, ask for asylum. Go elsewhere like on the moon or in Antarctica...I don't care, but I have a battle to fight. I would like an ally," he wistfully added, "But I will not force people to follow me. I ask only for loyalty and respect, and both I give back in the same amount. I do not need sycophants or people attracted to me because of power. All that follow me...have to be willing." Then he turned around, putting the cowl of the invisibility cloak back on. "Think about my offer...I'll see you tomorrow afternoon, hopefully."

And then he left, walking away from the girl in silence.

Severus Snape

Sometimes he wondered if he'd eventually go mad. Playing spy-games was something he didn't actually find amusing. Yet here he was, getting precisely gripped into a maddening triple or even quadruple game that he too, with all of his mental prowess, had trouble following. Dumbledore, the Voldemort that Lucius proclaimed to be the real one, another Voldemort that held Bellatrix' loyalty, yet one more Voldemort that was the wraith-like emanation of Slytherin's locket and finally the dastardly Voice that was still hanging around as if he had nothing better to do.

The wraith of the locket couldn't be destroyed unless the locket itself was, and when he had found that out, he'd ended up being forced to trap the thing in a bottle and hold it hidden within his mansion. The problem was that the locket was in the hands of Harry, and Harry was at Durmstrang until at the very least the start of the summer vacations, where he'd be at the safe house prepared for him. So he was forced to wait, while unnervingly knowing that in any moment another Voldemort could just as likely pop up from nowhere and ask for his loyalty.

He was starting to get tired of all this. Just how much longer would he have to go on playing spy for? A year, two? Three or four? If only some of the players around would just die, then everything would be easier. He groaned in frustration as he graded yet one more essay

from a dunderhead. Why did the boy in question not realize that the difference between counter-clockwise and clockwise could mean the difference between a potion and an explosion?

He was getting tired of having to force the students to keep themselves stocked with bezoars. Maybe, just maybe, he should let nature run its course and have the weak ones die off. Natural selection of the species and all was something the world did every single day. A pity Dumbledore wouldn't view it like that of course. He shook his head slowly, as he moved on to the seventh years essays. He didn't need much of a work on those. Few reached the standards he wanted for Newts, and of the few that did all he had to do was just skim it over once and grade it depending on how high Basileus had scored.

The boy was probably going to be taken under the apprenticeship of a potions' master. He would have been the first to offer the position to the teen, but with everything he had to do in his free time he truly didn't have time to spend teaching the more subtle bits of potion making to the boy. He'd be doing him a disservice, mostly. He took a sip of black tea, before raising his gaze to stare at his intruder.

"You will have to tell me how you can bypass the wards, eventually." He growled in a low voice, as the figure in front of him merely shrugged.

"Practice makes perfect." The Voice replied. "But I didn't come here to chat about wards and what-not. Take a guess on where our young charge spent his free time?"

Severus' eyes widened. "You can't be serious. I thought Azkaban's actions were a plan to get Pettigrew out of the prison...I didn't think...How did he do that from the safehouse?"

"Maybe because he never went there, Severus," The Voice replied quietly, "And he did not storm Azkaban alone, if that is what you thought." The Voice chuckled. "Gellert Grindelwald helped him quite a bit."

"Grindelwald is free!? That's impossible: it would have made the news! How can..."

The Voice rolled its eyes behind its mask.

"Severus...Nothing is impossible. A good old friend of mine used to say that removing the impossible, what remained was, no matter how highly improbable, the truth."

"He was never really imprisoned, was he?" The potions' master groaned, as his back hit against the chair. "Albus was a fool to put him there."

"A fool was he? Or maybe he wasn't one? Did he do that on purpose I wonder?" The Voice chuckled, "A lot of things I wonder, and yet more I know. He probably thought, no, he hoped that Gellert would escape. He wished for it maybe, to atone perhaps? It's something of his: always doing the sacrifice so that he can claim not to be completely evil. Like the monks who flog themselves, he too always builds up a path to his own destruction..." The masked and cloaked figure shook his head slowly.

"Ah the Hubris, the arrogance, the sheer desire for power and yet at the same time for his own downfall...does he believe himself a tragic hero, or an anti-hero? Does he maybe look at himself in the mirror and claims to be doing it all for a Greater Good?" The Voice chuckled again, this time a bit more heartily.

"He is hypocrisy at its finest."

"Oh?" Severus raised an eyebrow at that, "And you are not?"

"My dear Severus, I have a plan whereas he has but a trace: that's the difference."

"What do I have to do now?" He finally asked, relenting to get this discussion over with.

"Keep an eye out on Basileus...You might find something interesting if you look thoroughly." And then, with a quick sharp jerk, the figure disappeared.

"Of course he couldn't come out and say it clearly could he?" Severus mumbled as he resumed grading the homework.

He just hoped Bellatrix wouldn't finally give in to her psychosis. It was starting to get slightly out of hand, and what that woman was

planning was pure suicide. There was no way it would work, and even if it did certainly she would realize the folly of it! Yet it wasn't as if he could reason with a madwoman. He'd have to hope that Voldemort, the one of the cup, would let her see reason.

If he didn't, and he probably wouldn't, then he'd have to worry more about his own personal safety than ever before.

Heinrich Grindelwald

The library of Durmstrang's first three years' castle looked more like the underbelly of a barge ship than an actual library. The shelves were built as if they merely expanded from the walls themselves, and the ceiling was shaped like a dome. The librarian was a ghost, an old and cranky man with a pair of ghostly earlobes that were as big as his hands. An old Caribbean pirate probably, since his speech was filled with 'Aye' and 'Ahoy' and 'Ya harr' as if without them a sentence wasn't complete.

It was nothing like the study hall, and yet in its own way it appeared comfortable. Heinrich sat silently in one of the corner tables, his eyes glazing over the students who entered. It reminded him of the first year. In a certain twisted way, it was what he had been thinking about when he had made the offer. This time around there was no secret ward, no horrendous plot or anything else to excuse the girl. She would either come, or she'd come with the aurors, or she wouldn't come at all.

There was nothing else to say or to think. He tightly gripped on the clasp of his invisible cloak: at a moment's notice he could unclasp it, to let the invisibility one work its wonders and hide him, should the situation arise. Yet as he waited he couldn't help but feel excitement.

Would she come? Would she not come? Would she trust him or would she not? He knew he had gambled by claiming the life debts. He knew she could just as well ignore them, albeit maybe magic would subtly make her not so inclined to do so. His eyes fixed themselves upon the doorway, where the raven haired girl appeared after a few moments, the anxiousness clear in her features as she looked at him, and then walked up to his table.

He smiled as he gestured for her to sit down, his hand moving away from the clasp of his cloak.

"I'm not going to infringe any law." Jean muttered curtly.

"Don't worry about that." He replied carefully, "We just have to outsmart a few Heroes and Dark Lords...how hard is it going to be?" And just as he said that, he chuckled. The thing was impossible to do, the thing was rightfully difficult to do...it was something that only a madman would even attempt.

Yet there he was, and there she was. He had no doubt that more would come around: he'd make sure of it. He had built a group once, and he held little doubt that he had done wrongly at a certain point. He shouldn't have expanded on more than a one on one basis. This time around, he'd select his men and women carefully.

A second Voldemort they had thought of him, a lost child and a pawn to move at their will and leisure...

He'd show them all.

He was Harry Dursley, and he was no man's pawn: he was the King.

Author's notes

Took me two days instead of one. Busy working on a oneshot idea I had bumbling across my head for a while, related to the DH epilogue. Will probably post it by later.

That said, seamanship battle coming up soon! (And we proceed more into the year.)

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 13

Jean Gregorovitch, whose real name was Hermione Jean Granger, was smart. Time and time again he wondered just what she had told the hat to get sorted into Gryffindor, instead of Ravenclaw. Probably it was because she was book-smart, and not actually witty. She had no trouble memorizing things. She could recite books by heart with little trouble. She couldn't, however, connect things. The lack of food in spring was not connected to the increased revolts of the peasants in autumn or to the revolution in winter. She could easily tell the numbers of soldiers that fought off the revolutionaries, but she could not understand why they had fought, unless it had been written on the book.

Still, her mind suited him just fine like it was. It was with both of their brains working together, that some breakthroughs were made on the entire situation. The problem was that either they believed Voldemort to still be alive, or they didn't. The best bet was considering him alive and in wait, and because of that, they had to plan. The problem was what to plan for. The first step was Gellert: they needed a way out of his wing, and after that they would need a way out of Dumbledore's grasp. Finally, they would need a way out of Voldemort himself.

Without knowing what the others were planning however, it became extremely difficult to come up with something worth looking at. The only thing they had come up with had been contingencies like putting up safe-houses and portkeys, but they were too young for both of them. They had no political clout, and the few cards they held would certainly help them get into America, but they probably would stop there. Without something important to keep the American government protecting them, eventually it would be up to them.

The plan was actually simple in the end: remain under the wing of Gellert at least until the end of Durmstrang, and then hope the man had either died because of old age or deliver a notice to Dumbledore stating how the man was free to move around. While the two old crooks would fight each other again, they'd move to America at the same moment, unleashing the barrage of information earned against the. Best case scenario, Gellert killed Dumbledore and was then killed by the Americans.

Worst case scenario, Gellert and Dumbledore actually worked together and brought down the rest of the world. Still, the optimal case would be either Gellert or Dumbledore weakened and the American government on their toes. It would be better than nothing.

That brought forth the problem of finding a spot to train in. Hogwarts had the room of requirements, but Durmstrang didn't have anything that flashy after all. Sure, they could train in the room where people experimented on spells' effects, but it was always packed. Furthermore Heinrich wasn't intentioned to let anyone else see the repertoire of spells he usually practiced on: questions were bound to pop up on why he knew spells usually seen on a battlefield of centuries before.

They could use the plains, but they were too wide and open. They could ask the headmaster, but the man would probably wish to see for himself their training or even warn Gellert of it. What they needed, in the end, was a room nobody else used.

"What about using the invisibility cloak to hide in the spell casting room after curfew?"

Jean hazarded one day in a low whisper, sitting next to him during the Mythological Creatures lesson. The professor in question was a truly old looking man, with a giant and deformed hunch on its back who barely held his head up thanks to a wooden walking stick. His hair was practically non-existent, except for small locks that sprouted somehow from different spot of his balding head and descended all the way till the floor.

The man's name was Osvald, and he was apparently the oldest professor around Durmstrang, having at least one hundred and thirty-two years of active service, and having started at twenty-two, it made him one hundred and fifty-four years old. Some students claimed he had taken a sip of the Elixir of life one day, or that he drank unicorn's blood at night. Whatever the reason was, the professor was old, cranky and half-deaf, but he lived on and was currently explaining Nundus.

This made it the perfect moment to speak about what to do concerning their training. Especially considering Heinrich had

already faced a Nundu once: sure, he had Heather with him, but he had still fought one of those and survived. He winced at the memory of the fight: at the speed those curse had flown, he highly doubted he'd ever be ready to fight the real deal. Voldemort as a possessive shade was probably not even half as powerful as the real deal. It led to the problem of how truly strong both Gellert and Dumbledore were.

It wouldn't do however to mope before even having tried something.

"Weren't you the one against breaking laws?" Heinrich retorted quietly, "And what if someone comes by and hears us?"

"We just have to be quiet." Jean whispered back. "We could start with..."

"As fascinating as it sounds." A voice hissed behind them, bringing them both to turn around and stare at Elmo, "If all you want to do is kiss around, might I suggest you go in the abandoned greenhouse? It's near the corridor to the bridge that leads to the seventh year students' castle. Nobody goes there at all last I checked." He smiled and winked, "Ah, l'amore..."

"Ehm..." Heinrich coughed, "Yes...I...Think...Yes."

Jean for her side was practically blushing at the implication.

"I suggest transfiguring some chairs and a table though," the plumb boy added. "It would be just like Lilly and the Tramp you know, that Disney movie?"

"It's Lady and the Tramp." Heinrich whispered back quickly, hoping to change the argument.

"Darn. It must have been changed in the translation of the cartoon. In Italian the female dog is called Lilli...just assumed the name was the same in English."

"The bitch...a female dog is called a bitch." Jean found her center few seconds later, as Elmo raised an eyebrow at the girl correcting him. Heinrich kept silent, seeing how the Italian boy was furrowing his brows in concentration, before nodding.

"Understood." He had probably held his tongue for some reason, but he knew better than to ask. Still this did kind of show that they couldn't just whisper around without being heard at all.

"Why are you here Elmo?" Heinrich suddenly asked, "You weren't in Mythological creatures before."

"Oh, I was actually waiting for a chance to talk with you Heinrich. Found you entering, had free period, came by and saw you hush talking to your girlfriend. Didn't want to interrupt," the boy shrugged, explaining with inarticulate sentences his reasoning, "We have our first battle tomorrow. I wanted to know if you'd rather be at the oars or casting."

"Well," Heinrich began, glad that he had a way to change the embarrassing argument with something easier to speak of. "It's the same for me really."

"You won't mind if I take the oars then, right?" Elmo added carefully, "I'd rather not make a fool of myself on the first bout."

Heinrich shrugged slightly. "It's the same. How hard can it be?"

Those, unfortunately, were the famous last words.

The next day

The oars were dropped into the water at the same time, as the students assigned to them began to move the Karvi out of its docks and into the water of the sea-lake. Their captain, Alonso, was sending curses up in the air as they saw who their enemy was. The caravel came out from the docks of the middle years, and it looked so small from where they stood that it didn't seem such an impossible battle at all.

As the sails of the enemy caravel billowed and it began to move closer fast, really fast, Heinrich realized he had been wistfully thinking stupid things. The caravel was bigger than their Karvi by a really long shot. Even though they had the benefit of having their cannons mounted forward, meaning they could fire while pursuing or nearing the ship, it all accounted to nothing if the enemy's range was enough to merely fire from their own broadside.

"Voga!" Elmo yelled as his arms moved to push the oar, their ship sailing through the lake as fast as it could humanly go. The chorus of 'Voga' soon substituted the tension felt, as if they were going for a Kamikaze-run, none seemed intentioned in steering their course. The air flew straight against his face as the ship moved up and down, his feet firmly planted on the wooden surface of the vessel. A rope was circling his waist, tying him to the mast so that he would not fall down from the increased speed.

The enemy caravel steered to the right, displaying its broadside and the gleaming in the sunlight cannons, Heinrich gulped down in fear, keeping hold of his nervousness as he sincerely hoped they wouldn't be charging in blindly.

"RIGHT OARS DOWN!" Alonso roared, and as the oarsmen moved to obey, the Karvi jerked to the right itself, abruptly changing direction as the pull of the momentum brought Heinrich to let out a startled cry. He nearly was flung in mid-air, but his hands grasped on the bulwark of the ship near him and he let out a startled breath of relief. He hadn't really understood what it meant to be on a Viking ship, renowned for their maneuverability. Actually, he had just thought up until then that the word itself meant little to nothing. It meant everything, as the roaring cannons of the caravel fired.

The Flipendo spells charged from within the cannons' mouths hit the water behind them repeatedly as their captain screamed once more.

"OARS UP, DOUBLE TIME!" The right side moved up its oars, before starting once more to row at twice the speed of before, if such a thing was possible. They were moving towards the back of the caravel itself, which was the soundest strategy available considering how their only point of strength was the different allocation of their cannons. The enemy caravel quickly began to stir to the side, its masts doing their job at redirecting the wind.

"WANDS FORWARD!" Alonso yelled out loud, "HIT THEM WITH ALL YOU'VE GOT MEN!" With his left hand holding for dear life on the bulwark, and his right hand forward with his wand that was just then sparkling from its tip, he gritted his teeth as yelled out loud.

"Flipendo!" Jets of orange mixed with purplish-red, the charged version of the spell, launched themselves forward. Many came quite

a bit short, but the charged ones went further ahead and hit the back of the ship, whose parchments were now turning from white to a dark green shade. The color would then morph to yellowish and finally to bright red, before giving away the side of the ship. If the parchment ended up morphing to black, then the ones near it would start changing color too to signify the leak and the inevitable sinking of the ship.

The cannons of the Karvi did their job better, turning a few parchments to a healthy yellow on the back of the ship, while the caravel steered to the right again, trying to once more broadside them. All that it took was probably only one hit from the enemy to sink them, and that was why there was a tense nervousness aboard the Viking vessel.

"OARS TO THE LEFT UP!" Alonso yelled a command that was probably similar to bringing down the right oars, because the next moment a sharp pull of the right side brought them to stir to the left, avoiding a second barrage from the caravel and bringing them once more behind the enemy ship.

"FIRE!" The chorus of shots came from forward this time around, as some of the students aboard the caravel had probably countered the ship's only way of winning by placing themselves as a rearguard of sorts. Alonso's Protego spell came up in a flash, shielding him as he took steps backwards, ending up behind the mast. In doing so, however, the Flipendo spells flew straight downwards from the bulwarks of the caravel, smashing against the frontline oarsmen and fighters and taking them out.

As soon as the oars were dropped the Karvi came to an abrupt halt, flinging forward the middle oarsmen who grunted in pain from the oars' backslash. Heinrich was fast in taking point in front of Elmo, and as his Protego shield flared up it sparked for every Flipendo that struck against it. The caravel jerked to the side, abruptly lowering one of its back anchors and literally steering on the spot in order to give its broadside finally on the Karvi.

"AIM!" The roar of the twenty-four armed students on the enemy ship came with a deafening cry as their Viking vessel was soon flank to flank with the enemy caravel. The caravel had no need for oars, having no less than three masts to hold its sails billowing because of the wind. His wand was in his hand, sparkling slightly because of the

pressure. The timing of the shield this time had to be precise: if it wasn't he'd just waste it and be taken down by all of them.

"SHIELDS UP!" Their captain bellowed at the same time as the enemy's ship one yelled the command to open fire. Alonso was apparently standing behind their mast, probably because the captain's death meant the end of the battle.

The cannons of the caravel roared one after the other, the mighty strength of the rune-enhanced artillery jettisoning water from the surface of the lake upwards all around them, as more hits impacted against their only mast. The slips of parchment on it turned a sickly green, before it morphed into a bright red as their ships was suddenly jerked to a near halt. The oars broke from the impact of the sudden halt and were left in disarray by the students who scampered to the side where the enemy caravel was still firing upon them.

The caravel too stopped its movement, and soon a battle of attrition between the two sides began. Spells of purple red and orange met shields just as few were sent back, the lack of numbers showcasing itself when the twenty-four students of the other side of the caravel moved to the opposite side to bring forth reinforcements. Forty-eight wands were non-stop casting at them from the bulwarks, the sails, the ropes. The fact that a few were downed by them who were only a bit more than a dozen

"Protego!" Heinrich yelled. His shield was flaming a light yellow color as the Flipendo spells rebounded back. His wand sparked stronger as his heart began to pump faster, blood rushing up to his ears as he swiped his wand back and forth for the Protego again and again.

"Protego! Protego! Protego!" He roared as the number of spells flung in his direction increased with the diminishing number of allies aboard the Karvi. Few seconds later, and he and Elmo were the only two aboard the ship not yet hit and flung unconscious or out of the ship, barring their captain who was most cowardly standing behind the mast.

A few spells nicked him in the shoulder, but he kept his shield up. As long as he didn't fall and the charged spells didn't fling him unconscious, he would not fall there. His wand was scalding to the touch, as if a small sun had decided to make its nest within its

wooden form. He gritted his teeth as he conjured the shield once more. He heard the spell-storm of Flipendo hit it like rain against a window. Sparks flew in the air where they hit showering in golden and crimson sparks the side of the bulwarks.

"Flipendo!" Elmo yelled from behind him. The jet of purplish-red parted from his wand and reached the upper levels of the caravel, taking down an enemy. The barrage apparently stopped there for a second, maybe enough for Heinrich to catch his breath, if he lowered his shield. Yet he could not in good conscience do so: he half suspected it to be a trick to catch him off-guard.

The judge of the battle suddenly made his presence known in that moment. He was the Seamanship's course instructor, a portly man with a small goatee and a pair of small thin and trimmed mustaches. He was currently floating near the area on a flying carpet: apparently the laws on their prohibition didn't matter in Durmstrang. The man had raven hair and brown eyes, and as he lowered himself down for a moment to look at the downed opponent on the caravel, he chuckled.

"Mister Luzzato! Excellent shot: you actually downed their captain with it! Your team wins." The judge commented clapping his hands, as Heinrich blinked like Elmo did.

They had won?

"Well done Elmo! I knew you had it in you! All went according to the plan of course!" Their captain said, coming out from its hiding spot behind the mast, chuckling nervously. Heinrich raised an eyebrow at their captain, but said nothing else. What was there to say? That their 'captain' had displayed an excellent plan called tactical retreat? That they had won because of pure luck? Doing that was going to land him nowhere but on the boy's enemy list, and he had enough enemies on his own list to know when to avoid adding a fourth year to it.

He should have laughed at that actually: he had three heroes, three monsters, three extremely powerful wizards on his enemy list that he completely disregarded stuff that another his age would have fought for. Elmo was keeping quiet probably because of the golden badge:

it wouldn't do to disrespect their captain. He could talk, but he chose not to.

"Return to your docks then!" The judge pointed out, as he flew away from the scene on his flying carpet. Alonso took a deep sigh, before starting to wake up the rest of the crew. The words 'Enervate' were at his lips as soon as their captain began his work.

All in all, Seamanship wasn't that bad, if one barred the risk of being assaulted by over a dozen of spells at the same time, of course.

Severus Snape

The door of his office creaked open timidly. He was currently busy on a particular batch of dreamless sleep potion and because of the delicacy required while treating certain ingredients he could not turn around to see who was entering. Considering his wards however, the number of persons permitted to enter were scarce. Out of all of them, the fact that they had yet to talk while he was busy working on a potion meant that the number was even lower.

Since Slughorn was not in the castle last he had checked it could truly be only him or Dumbledore. He stirred counter-clockwise once more, before finally speaking.

"I am busy at the moment." He spoke carefully, "It can wait."

He heard a slightly rustling of feet, and then a hesitant voice spoke after a few more seconds of dreadful silence.

"Sev, I..."

"Madam Potter." He muttered, his heart clenching as his eyes narrowed on the potion, distaste probably clear on his tongue. "I am occupied." Silence descended once more in the room. He was starting to hope the woman had taken the cue and left, and he had merely not heard the door creak to a close considering the blood rushing to his head, but when Lily Potter asked again, he knew he hadn't been that lucky.

"You're making a dreamless potion, right?" The tone was hesitant, as those red strands of hair came into his view. She had probably

moved closer to the potion cauldron itself. He sighed as he knew there was no way to prevent the argument.

"Are you going to accuse me of having brought Harry over to Voldemort's side?" He asked with barely kept contempt. "If you are, you can leave."

"I wasn't going to." Lily fretfully said, before looking at his hands moving to get the flobberworm essence. "You're adding flobberworm now?" She asked, curious as always.

"A pinch now, one later, and its effects will be quicker to take hold." He replied in his usual teacher voice. "As fascinating as it would be to speak of potions with you, Madam Potter, please tell me what brought you here then."

She recoiled as if visibly struck, before queasily saying.

"I wanted to talk Sev, only talk. No need to get all grumpy!"

"And I am currently busy, Madam Potter." He replied immediately.

"What's got you on the defensive Sev? I only want to know more about..."

"No." He cut her short. He hated doing this, but he had no choice. "What I know about Harry is what I discovered by taking my own time in looking after him. He was surprisingly keen on learning and studious, extremely polite to a fault, and the sheer fact that you just believed in what someone else told you without proof...that's what I dislike. You're doing it again, Lily. The only difference is that I was your friend and told you a single word...whereas this is your son we're talking about. See what the others want you to see then, I've got no time to waste on dunderheads or petty gossip queens." Then he sharply turned around and walked over to the asphodel roots. He had to chop them neatly in time, and he hoped for Lily to just leave before he turned back again.

When he turned back, Lily was still there, her eyes watery and her hands clasped together in front of her chest.

"I'm...I'm a horrible mother am I? I...I saw him there, that night, didn't I? You were walking along the corridor with him and he was

looking at me, and his eyes were like mine and he...he told me, he told me there and then that I was his mother and I dismissed it, I know I shouldn't have but I did. I saw him and how he moved and how he looked so much like James and I dismissed it all because of a stupid curse, but there and then...there and then that night the curse was gone wasn't it? I just didn't think long enough...I...I ignored him and god only knows what he must have thought of me there and then and...and..."

He walked briskly over to the potion cauldron, lowering the flame with his wand as apparently he would need a bit more time to complete the potion than he had thought about. Bellatrix was in no order of importance near Lily's troubles, and if the madwoman couldn't sleep, then it would make her easier to overpower. He took out a handkerchief from one of his sleeves, handing it over to the woman who was apparently crying her heart out.

He wasn't going to lie to himself and say he wasn't uncomfortable about it. It wasn't as if this had never happened before. Lily was a strong woman, but like every strong person even she had a point of breakage. He knew that better than anyone else, and knew that when she usually broke it wasn't over herself, but over someone else near her. He could count on the fingers of his hand the number of times she had cried for herself.

"Thanks." She whispered, as she took the handkerchief to wipe out her tears, "I'm...I'm sorry I..."

"He never questioned me," he began speaking slowly, not even realizing he was actually telling the woman something when he had promised himself he wouldn't, "He never asked why I was actually helping him out. He could have done so easily, any time, but he didn't. If...if he had, I wasn't sure of what I could tell him." He moved towards the drawer in his office desk, taking out a stack of papers, before grabbing a letter.

"Your sister wrote to me repeatedly, asking me to keep an eye out on him." He said quietly, "You know your sister always had a spiteful streak in her, yet she was willing to forget it all in favor of Harry. Just like a real mother would."

"But she told us how they treated him!" She yelled at him, not understanding as her eyes widened in shock. He knew this was

going to come back and bite him, he knew it, and yet...yet he realized he just couldn't let someone go to the grave while being spat upon. Not when they should be honored, instead of insulted. Even Petunia wasn't meant to be dishonored in her grave.

"Then read these, and then tell me if what you saw is the same as what was written." He replied quietly, handing over the stack of papers and the letter. "They're all in order."

"Sev...she...but she and that husband of hers...they..." Lily babbled. She didn't understand yet, maybe she needed one final push.

"Tell me, Lily. When you have nowhere else to run to, when you have no-one else to believe in, what do you do when someone offers you a hand?" He spoke carefully. "When you think your parents have abandoned you, when you think everyone is ignoring you, when you think no-one is there to help you...when someone offers you a hand...do you refuse it? Or do you look upon the one who extends the hand as if he were a saint?" He smiled bitterly, "I know the answer to that question all too well, Lily. For being smart, you still apparently are human."

She cringed. She shook her head slowly as she grabbed the first letter of the stack. He knew all too well what was written on the first lines after all.

Severus,

I'm sorry. It took me hours to come up with that starting line, so you'd better take it well understood? I know I was never kind to you in our youth, and I can understand if some of that resentment still lingers around. There is one thing, however, that I ask of you. Please, take care of Lily's son if I can't. Keep an eye on him. If you really want to hate someone, then I'm here and I'll understand, but not Harry. Please, not Harry.

"Do you think those words belonged to the same Petunia you met in America?" He asked after a few minutes had passed by. "I don't think so, and neither do you any longer."

"H...How? W...Why didn't you tell me before!? It's written here! Lily's son! You knew and you didn't..." Her words showed her hurt, and as

her eyes locked accusingly into his, he knew he had to tread carefully.

"I did not read that line!" He exclaimed back, "The curse was still working, Lily! I skipped all the lines that hinted at him being your son! I didn't know about it until after it stopped working! So tell me, should I feel horrible for having had the truth written in front of me and not having seen it or what!?" He took a small breath, before whispering. "You're not a horrible mother, Lily. You couldn't know."

"T...Thank you Sev." She whispered, after a few minutes of silence in which she silently read once more her sister's letter. "I...I'll be visiting my sister soon then, I...I should have checked on her at least..."

He said nothing. He knew that Lily would find out the death of her sister eventually, but adding it together with these letters was his best bet in changing things. If only he could push the woman in the right direction, on the one to really put the blame on...

"If she was controlled by the Imperius," he spoke carefully, "Then Voldemort would never have moved her. He could have just as easily taken him during the summer vacation. There was no need to send her and her husband out of the country."

"What...what are you trying to say Sev?" Lily asked, her eyes the size of a doe's ones.

"What I'm trying to say, Lily..." He whispered back, "Is that I don't think the Dark Lord was the one who Imperius-ed Harry's parents to begin with."

She did not reply to him there and then. She just stood up and left quietly, closing the door behind her with a soft thud. He merely shook his head and returned to his work. He had given her enough to think about. Of course...he had lied. He had known from the start that Harry was Lily's son, but at the very least, with this, the woman wouldn't probably fault herself too much. He cursed his heart actually. He had done his best to let it shrivel up and die, but apparently he was just human.

That suited him just fine: better to be human, than a beast.

Hagrid

"Yer sure this is it?" He asked the tall woman who was apparently half a giant herself.

"Of course I'm sure." Maxime Olympe replied rolling her eyes, as she pointed her hands towards the sunken coast. "The sunken city of Ys is right here."

"Seem to be a bit empty." He replied nudging a bit of sand with the tip of his pink umbrella. How the hell Gellert had found his wand was a surprise, but apparently the old man knew what he was doing. Still, he kind of wondered why he had been chosen to end up here.

"Well, yes. It seems." Olympe muttered, "You can tell your employer what I told the other man: the French school of Beauxbatons has claims on the city of Ys, so if they do manage to find the entrance they indeed need to warn us. We are the ones who possess the key to the gates."

"Will do, ye think ye could tell me who the other guy is?" He asked, not letting his nervousness show.

"Why if it isn't Hagrid," A Voice smoothly said from behind him. He widened his eyes as he turned around, staring into the masked figure with a cloak covering its features. "I always wondered what happened to you...you're treating yourself not so well I see."

"And who the hell are you?" Hagrid asked, narrowing his eyes as he brought his umbrella forward.

The Voice chuckled. The cowl came down.

The mask was removed.

And a face showed itself behind the mask.

"It's been a while, hasn't it?"

White hair and dark eyes showed themselves behind the mask, wrinkles of old age on a shaved face. Hagrid looked at the man for a moment, narrowing his gaze before finally muttering a single word.

"Who are you?"

The Voice chuckled.

"An old man, Hagrid. An old man..."

Author's notes

And I get the hate from my readers by leaving it unknown for the moment. Well, now you know where Hagrid is at least. White hair and Dark eyes. Can't be Grindelwald or Voldemort...remember that since white hair is a sign of age it could pretty much have had different hair color in the wiki.

And yeah, Zhertvy means sacrifices!

PS: This is the Sixtieth chapter! Sixty chapters! I'll give you an omake for this!

OMAKE:

The Voice chuckled. The cowl came down.

The mask was removed.

And a face showed itself behind the mask.

"It's been a while, hasn't it, old friend?"

Hagrid blinked.

"Gandalf?"

And the Grey Mage nodded with a bright smile.

"Indeed! But we must do haste, the dark lord Sauron rises and we must stop him soon! Rally the races of men and elves, while I seek the help of the Tower of Saruman!"

"Er...Yeah. Right."

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 14

There was a begrudging respect from the other third years for Elmo's shot; begrudging because apparently Elmo was a muggle-born son of a squib and his muggle wife. He hadn't known about that, only that he did like to speak about his grandfather a lot, but not about his father or mother. The day he had been found out doing accidental magic apparently, his parents had all but dropped him at his grandfather's steps. It didn't actually bother the Italian boy much though: it wasn't that bad.

His grandfather had fought in the second world wide war for the king first and for Mussolini later on, and he had hastily admitted that in those time, there just wasn't a choice. Mussolini had Hitler's gun at his back to keep on fighting, and the Italians had Mussolini's guns that did the same. There just wasn't a choice when you had family, and in the magical world Gellert was pretty much the same. You either fought for him or you just didn't wake up one morning.

That was why the only thing Elmo was sure of, as he kept up boasting in the dining hall to the other third years, was his aim. His grandfather had been pretty clear on it: power matters not if the enemy keeps on ducking. Heinrich was already starting to hear versions of an epic clash against the fourth years' secret curses and how they had fought them off with the power of the sun. He would have gladly pointed out that a Heliopath's core was in his wand, but that wouldn't have helped his situation.

"You don't like the attention?" Jean asked him with a sort of amused smile, her nose in a book.

"No, I don't." He muttered back, eying her as she merely pocketed some food from the table. The book was actually a cover, but also the food was a cover too. Romantic midnight snack, in case of being found out in the abandoned greenhouse. It was a bit far-fetched, but it was a good enough excuse.

"Considering your nickname...I wouldn't have said that." She replied thoughtfully. "How did it come to be that to begin with?"

"Draco's idea," he muttered back, "was of others as pawns and me as king. Hence, King." He shook his head slowly, "I'd rather be a Queen though...they have freedom."

Jean didn't speak any longer, since there was nothing else to be said. Once they were finished with lunch, they both went their own way for lessons. They'd meet again before curfew and put on the invisibility cloak to begin with, and then they'd reach the greenhouse in question. At most, they'd only get an hour or so of training in, but he knew that it didn't matter how much time one spent working, but with whom and on what.

An hour with Gellert was probably like doing an entire term in Defense Against the Dark Arts to begin with, just like an hour with Dumbledore was as close as possible to one hour with a ferocious dragon of sorts...and he had been facing a dragon for a few seconds during his escape from Hogwarts to begin with.

Late in the afternoon, with the sun already settled due to the winter months and the cold chilly wind blowing through the plains, the two of them began their walk through the plains hidden by the invisibility cloak towards the abandoned greenhouse.

"Where did you get this cloak?" Jean suddenly asked, her hands moving through the symbols etched upon its surface. "It's like Lillian's."

"Keep your voice down." He whispered back, "And...well, I got it from the Weasley brat."

"Ron?" Jean hissed. "This is Lillian's cloak!" She moved closer to him beneath it, muttering furiously, "How the hell did you get it from Ron!?"

"Forbidden forest, spiders, and an Obliviate from a friend," he replied curtly, taking out his wand and moving it closer to the greenhouse's door.

"Stop!" She exclaimed, "There's a ward on the door."

"Why, you thought I'd just use Alohomora?" Heinrich sing-song, "Well there's no need really..." His wand touched the dirt beneath their feet, and the next moment they were a few meters below the

earth's crust, in a pocket of ground. He could feel Jean wobbling and holding onto his back for balance, the abrupt change in scenery probably hitting her.

"Am I blind now?" She asked with a sort of queasy and higher pitched voice.

"No. We're underground. Hold your breath while I transfigure a passage." He muttered again moving his wand in circles in front of him as the dirt gave way to a small rock tunnel that led directly beneath the greenhouse. "See? This is how you..." He stilled and held his breath.

The rushing sound of water came to his ears, just as the smell of sea water infringed against his nostrils. The dark tunnel was suddenly illuminated by small pale tendrils of light belonging to torches placed at the far end of the makeshift tunnel. He clenched his wand tighter as he moved forward, Jean following him tensely and silently. This was unexpected. He had thought about there being ice below the Iceberg, not the sea immediately. Weren't Icebergs supposed to be mostly bigger below the sea level than above?

He realized that his tunnel that should have led them beneath the middle of the greenhouse had instead crossed a descending staircase that was probably hidden by something on the floor above. He had found a secret passage of Durmstrang probably, as the flickering lights kept on display on the sides of the small passage showed, it was one fairly trafficked. The noise of the waves infringing against something was pretty loud and easy to hear, probably due to some sort of echo.

He looked back to Jean, who was staring at him while biting her lower lip, probably trying to recall if Durmstrang was famous for its secret passages. Gellert would have told him if he had needed to know, or maybe he simply didn't know of them too. He snorted at that thought: there was little that Gellert truly didn't know, and Durmstrang? That was not one of those things.

With a quick movement of the head, he gestured for Jean to follow him down the stairs, carved in stone that slowly turned to ice with a light frosting atop them. The temperature suddenly dropped as they found themselves entering what looked like a giant underground bay.

Of course! He mentally insulted himself. The ships for the Seamanship battles had to come from somewhere after all: it was clear this was one of the many underground docks the caravels were stored into until needed.

He was already turning to speak to Jean about where they had actually ended, when he froze. His gaze was settled on the sides of the docks, where runes stood etched atop the ice cavern walls, eerily glinting red.

Zhertvy.

The rune of sacrifices, to empower wards with the blood of wizards...but somewhere deep down he knew the rune was wrong. The rune was twisted, darker. Not made to hold up wards, but to chain down something. Something that stood deeply contained and hidden away. The arrays were snake like in form and dimensions, and as he neared seemingly transfixed the giant rune etched on the side, he knew why he felt the wrongness from the castle propagate.

He felt it twisting in his very own soul, battling to come out as he gleefully moved his hand closer to it, closer to his greatest creation. Closer to what Hogwarts could have had and could have been, had they but accepted him, his greatness and his powers. They had refused...but all was not lost. No, the fleet, the army, it was there. Never theirs and never of all...only his: the runes ensued that. It was his work, why would he stupidly give power onto others that he could not manage to hold for himself too?

A hand grasped at his arm, pinning it down next to his body as Jean hissed, the damn muggle-birthed.

"Heinrich! What the hell do you think you're doing!?" She exclaimed scathingly, "You don't touch something of this size barehanded! Look at that! Merlin's beard: look at the size of that runic array!"

"I...I don't know." He whispered back. "I don't know but...it feels familiar. It's calling to me." He muttered, "It is calling and I have to answer."

"Heinrich?" The girl recoiled, but it did not matter to him now. Not in that moment, no, his eyes were gazing the runes that moved and twirled upon his very eyes like snakes whose coils were the etched

lines. They circled around themselves lazily, and yet he could see them. This wasn't a passage, but a mere deliverer of the power. The Zhertvy were brought elsewhere. This ward could hold only this iceberg. There had to be at least another one for each of the other icebergs, and finally a massive one for the entire complex.

This was a masterpiece: a product of old, something that only the ancient legends could have birthed and given form. It sang to him and called for him, and yet he could...not...

Jean Gregorovitch

One moment, Heinrich was beneath the invisibility cloak with her. The next instant, he was out of it, standing tall in front of the symbol itself. His wand, the first one and not the one they had taken from Gregorovitch himself, was out and sending thick tendrils of smoke out of its tip. She felt cold and dread wash over her in waves as the memory of Azkaban returned and clashed against her own nervousness and anxiety at the scene. Fear, primordial and devastating, attacked her senses and sent her on the floor pushing with her hands as far away from him as she could.

The invisibility cloak suddenly lurched as if armed of its own free will, twirling and twisting until it clasped firmly once more on Heinrich's back. This time, however, it did not turn him invisible. The wand in the boy's hand gave a final powerful lurch, as if something within fought to emerge out and the next instant...

The wand's extremity burst in splinters as a loud sharp wail screamed itself into the room. She stared in utter fright as the thing, the Dementor...as the monster moved its brittle face close to Heinrich's mouth, ready to devour him. It was but a moment, and then the cloak moved by itself. It covered the boy from sight and view once more, as if it knew the monster was to be kept away from Heinrich. She watched in fear as the eyeless orbits of the Dementor turned their hungry gaze on her.

With an unearthly grace the figure moved closer to her, its bony hand outstretched and nearly grasping at her neck. She closed her eyes as the memories of the prison, of her parents being obliterated, of her fright at being alone, once more, and as her eyes rolled back in her sockets...a single word brought her back to her senses.

"SALAZAR!" The very same cavern roared the name, in an ancient and guttural tone. The next second, the Dementor was gone, only a ghastly evanescence remained formed by small light grey smoke that slowly drifted away, drifted back into Heinrich's wand as it repaired itself. It was terrifying to behold and yet, for a single fleeting instant she saw the creature's eyes once more. Black pits of void looked at her with scorn and hatred, or maybe...they looked at something behind her?

The sound of feet soon echoed in the room, people were probably descending and she had to think fast. She dashed to where Heinrich had fainted, hiding beneath the cloak with him and against the wall. She couldn't lift the boy even if she wanted, but she could certainly manage to push the teen against the wall and use it as help in lifting him up. A group of teachers, followed closely by Karkaroff himself arrived on the scene.

The man was speaking in his native tongue, and the other professors had their wands out and uneasily looked around. The moment the headmaster neared them, she held her breath. She saw him check at the runic array, before turning sharply and mutter something sharply. The kind hearted face of the Infiltration in Muggle Society professor came into view, but she did not hold any kindness in her eyes at all. She looked more like an ugly vulture now, anger radiating from every pore.

"Students here?" She snarled. "They saw this Karkaroff?"

"Nein." The rune professor spoke next, "Had they, they would have been found."

"Transfiguration was used." A third man added, "There are traces of molded earth on the stairway: professional work."

"Better." Igor commented.

"How is that better, Igor!?" Professor Brunhilde spoke with an angry tone.

"Professionals...can be paid or disposed of." The Headmaster whispered, "The Zhertvy runes must not be rendered public. We would lose everything. The moment is near...a greater recharge perhaps would solve our problems."

"Should we use one more of the filth or one more thief of the art?" The old woman spoke with an ugly gleam in her eyes. "I've got my eyes on a little thief in my class. The Gregorovitch girl is..."

"No." Igor snapped just as she drew her breath sharply, maybe too sharply, because the next moment all wands pointed at her, or to be more precise, in the area where they were.

"Come on out, mister." Igor spoke seriously. "Whatever your employer is paying you, we of Durmstrang can double if for an unbreakable vow never to reveal what you have seen tonight."

The headmaster gestured at the others to move closer. She tightened her hold on Heinrich, who grumbled something in his sleep. With the added noise of the grumbles, the professor now knew far better where they were...and she couldn't move Heinrich with ease. If she unclasped the invisibility cloak, she could use it to hide...but it would reveal the boy. He was the one Gellert had took an interest in, they'd leave him alive if she did that, wouldn't they?

She was the one at risk. The woman had called her 'thief'. She couldn't believe it, yet she had heard her. If she was discovered...they'd kill her. She'd probably be used for whatever strange ritual they did in the school. She had to warn the international police stationed on the ship. So why was she letting go of Heinrich? Because she couldn't betray his trust? This was stupid! She knew not a single spell that could work against all those professors. What could she do!? She took a deep breath, and then she dashed out from beneath the invisibility cloak and towards the end of the docks.

She took three steps, all in all, and then she felt her entire body burn as she fell on the ground, barbed wire wrapping around her entire body as she screamed in pain.

"Stop! Stop!" Igor yelled. She could hear the headmaster's voice clearly even though her entire body was wracked in pain. Her voice turned hoarse from the screams, but as the pain passed, she barely managed to open her eyes in worry and stare at the faces of the other professors who were looking at her with scorn and distaste.

"It's the Gregorovitch girl! I knew the little thief wouldn't be happy only with what pitiful magic she stole from us! She had to..."

"Shut up Brunhilde!" Igor snapped back, before turning his eyes towards her again. "Does Heinrich know you're here?" He asked carefully, his wand poised as if to strike. She closed her eyes and hissed back.

"Yes! He knows and he'll be bringing back reinforcements! You were found out and discovered, now reap what..."

And then she felt as if someone had punched her in the stomach, her breath coming less as her gaze filled with multicolored stars before turning blank and...and she fell on the side of the ice floor, blood coming out from her mouth. She felt tired, really tired.

"Prepare her for the Zhertvy. We'll need all the luck we can get...maybe add someone else too...all this..."

And then she lost consciousness.

Lillian Potter

Her mother and her father were acting strangely since a few days. She had no idea what the two of them were thinking, but she knew better than to ask. The thirty-one of October was coming around, and with it all that it entailed. Once upon a time, she'd get a load of gifts from various people all over the world, for what she had 'done' that night. Right about now, she doubted her parents would skim through the gifts or the letters. It was probably for the better. Busy as they were they didn't notice she was silently ignoring more and more the deadline to enter the Quidditch team.

Albeit avoiding Wood was steadily becoming a hassle, she was still managing with the marauder map. Madam Pince hadn't even been actively looking for her. Probably the old woman had contented herself with the permission slip. The problem with learning Occlumency was that it usually needed someone else to practice with, someone that would probe the shields placed. She couldn't rely just on anyone to do it. So all that she could do was keep up trying by herself and hoping she was doing things right, instead of wrong.

Ron appeared with his clothes torn from a nearby hallway, blood pouring down his nose as he held a hand clamped on it. In the other hand he was tightly holding his snapped wand, but the hunched down shoulders showed that they had hit him somewhere else too: to hazard a guess, his pride must have taken a sore blow.

"Ron?" She asked worriedly, moving closer, "Are you all right?"

"No." He whined, "I was trying to get Draco to stop corrupting my sister, but she...she's the one who attacked me." He mumbled. "Mom's going to have her heart broken."

She didn't ask anything more, instead simply helping Ron towards the infirmary without saying a word. She knew Ron would undoubtedly pour out his troubles in the few minutes it would take to reach the nurse, and indeed she was right.

"Mom was really angry over the summer." He muttered, "She didn't like Ginny in Slytherin at all. Said all the robes we had in the family were Gryffindor and the coloring would make them stink...somehow they ended up yelling about Slytherin stinking and my mother just yelled, and yelled, and screamed...She couldn't stew it over properly you know. So...Ginny left: went to Draco of all people." He snarled. "I haven't seen her since...now. And she attacked me. What am I supposed to tell my mom? That Ginny's a Malfoy now?"

"What?" Lillian mouthed, "How can...your parents are alive aren't they?"

"She renounced her surname and the Malfoy took her in. I don't know why they did it, but they did." Ron whispered. "She told me as she flung me out of the room and while sending hexes at me." He added. "She's gone dark. Like Slytherin, all after your bloody brother..."

"Ron!" She exclaimed angrily, "Maybe you're exaggerating. My brother has not gone to Voldemort willingly!"

He flinched, before retorting with vehemence, "Then why the hell did he escape from Hogwarts!?"

Because Dumbledore would have him imprisoned unjustly, just like Hermione. Lillian thought, and opened her mouth just to say that, but

stopped. She couldn't say anything to Ron. He was a good friend, but he wasn't...he wasn't smart enough for this. She too was afraid of letting her gaze slip up and stare at Dumbledore even once, and with his skill she suspected once would suffice.

"See?" Ron retorted, taking her silence for having said something right probably, "He ran: he's the culprit. He's with Voldemort and he got Hagrid and Hermione too. What else is there to say?"

That Dumbledore was evil. He wasn't taking that into account. He wasn't even trying to find out the truth! He was just...just dumb. She left him in the infirmary, turning on her heels as she headed out of the room. She couldn't stay in the same room with someone who'd so easily accuse her brother! Maybe she was wistfully thinking that her brother was innocent, but that the case what was the problem!? She'd face him eventually! All that one needed was enough strength to meet him as an equal, and there and then she'd get her truth out from him.

There was nothing else to think or talk about. So why did people keep on talking? She heard the whispers as she walked the hallway...and the next moment orange and white lights shot through one corner to the other, yells echoing through the corridor as she turned around in surprise. Students wearing gold and crimson colors were attacking a group of third or fourth years of Slytherin.

"Take that King's men! Revenge for Creevey! Revenge for Granger! Depulso!" A fourth year crashed against a wall, too slow to get to his wand. By the time the few remaining Slytherin managed to get their bearings, the ambushers had all left down another hallway. She looked in surprise as the few remaining Slytherin turned their gaze to her, wands ready.

"What is going on here!?" Pomona Sprout yelled as she moved closer to the scene of the carnage.

"Professor! The Gryffindors ambushed us in the corridor!" One of the Slytherins exclaimed, "They just ran behind the corner!"

"Is it true Miss Potter?" Madam Sprout asked, turning her worried face to her as she was currently checking for injuries on a female Slytherin that had a nasty gash on the cheek.

"I...I..." She sputtered. "Y...Yes!"

Yet as she said that she frowned. Why couldn't she recognize any of the Gryffindors' faces then?

"Dumbledore will hear of this! You can rest assured!" Sprout muttered darkly, "Attacking students in the hallways! This is ground for expulsion! Miss Potter, I'll need the names if you know them."

And to that, Lillian could say nothing...because she did not know any of them.

Basileus Sfor/Gellert Grindelwald

"Operation Murder of Crows completed." His right hand whispered as he later on yelled. "Newts here we come! Ready for the push!?"

"Ready for the push!" The others cheerfully exclaimed back. All had a bit of a hard breath, but it was normal for having run through the stairs from their sheer will of studying. Never mind the fact that they had held a sort of pit-stop to change from the fake Gryffindor clothes and had removed the notice-me-not charms on their faces. It didn't matter.

They were just there to study after all, not planning how to send Hogwarts down spiraling into chaos and violence. He on the other hand planned as the boys and girls of his study group began to work through a couple of basic spells to transfigure colors and clothes. It would be horrible if someone trick asked this question, and since they had been doing the very same exercises even the previous years...there was no way they had planned all this in such a little time.

The plan was flawless. The Potter girl had been precisely where he had wanted her to be, and since she had seen Gryffindors attack Slytherins, she had had no choice but to confirm the enemy's views. Same thing had staged with Pomona Sprout, who was mysteriously called to the Infirmary just in time to see the aftermath of the ambush. He smiled to himself mentally patting his back, as he looked at his loyal men and women of Ravenclaw. Who said that it was impossible for someone who had time and patience to rule the world? He could have tried to oust Dumbledore out of Hogwarts

through a fight, but directly attacking him in the school would have been suicidal.

In this way, instead...oh this way was perfect.

He could imagine it just now, the Slytherins claiming how the Gryffindors had attacked them. The cool heads would say to wait and see if the culprits were found and justice was served. Severus would probably try and say something Slytherin to ease tensions, like making revenge subtle to avoid suspicions and giving precious time for everything to cool off. Yet he knew also that as soon as Madam Sprout would end up claiming that Lillian remembered not one of the Gryffindors face, the Slytherins would start talking of it being all planned with the help of the Girl-Who-Lived to give safety to the higher years of the Lion's club.

Madame Sprout would slowly but surely be connected with the Hufflepuffs 'loyalist' branch that stood together with the Gryffindors, and the few neutral and against would have to face a change soon enough. Hannah Abbott would end up attacked by a couple of Hufflepuffs and Gryffindors, and that would lead to a tear down and a division in the house of the loyal. Then, to make everything even better, he'd make sure to have Seamus attacked by Hufflepuffs; that done, Draco would stand no longer in silence even with his godfather talking, and would probably rehearse one of Harry's speeches.

The neutrals would cease to exist, and with no true neutral in the school remaining, the forces would begin to clash...and then he'd come down hard as the Ravenclaw leader and Headboy, entering the fight himself towards the end...and by calling it a revolution he'd let the students, of all things, oust out Dumbledore! And the board of governors would have to remove him and ask itself the question of why children were literally tearing each other apart in the hallways of the school!

Ah the supreme irony of the thing!

Heinzar Grindetherin

"Stop this."

"Stop what?"

"Stop fighting me."

"Who are you!?"

"I can save your friend. Stop fighting me."

"What are you talking about!? Who the hell are you!?"

"Ignorant and petulant children! had I not a need for your body intact..."

Heinrich blinked. "You're a ghost!"

Salazar snorted. "No. A ghost has already passed beyond. I am not a ghost. I can still return to life. Hand over your body to me, and I'll save your precious friend."

"What's your name?" He asked hotly. "Why do you possess me?"

"For blabbering about being my heir you sure are thick." Salazar muttered, swiping his arm in front of him, "I am Salazar Slytherin. It is imperative you give me back control. Stop fighting me!"

"No! Just no!" Heinrich yelled back, "This is my body! Get the hell out of here and get yours! Or pass on for what it matters!"

"Pass on?" Salazar snickered, "You are nothing without me, and you'd dare have me 'pass on' and leave you?"

"It's not true!"

"Without me, you are nothing. You are no King. I influenced your speeches. I moved your hands and guided your actions! I myself convinced my descendant to take you under his wing!"

"The Bloody Baron?"

"Indeed! All that you are is what I made you! Now give me my body!" Salazar roared, "It is mine by right of conquest and blood! For centuries I waited for the one who could open the city of Atlantis! For centuries I stood in wait! And then you came along and I realized the foolishness of my first heir. I realized just what he had done

and...and I laughed out loud as you chose me, over all the other wands available. What does Ollivander say? Oh yes..."

The scenery around them, till then thick and covered in dark smoke changed, to show a seemingly human Salazar standing behind the counter of Ollivander's shop, a wand in hand.

"It is the wand that chooses its wizard, not the opposite." Salazar snickered before laughing maniacally. "Yet you possessed another wand. One that apparently found its way to you...yet look at you now! Torn and fighting me! ME! While your friend is going to die. Bow to me, accept me, and I will save her here and now. Every moment that passes the Zhertvy ritual grows closer, and on the night of Samhain the shield of Skathach will be lowered once more! That is my moment! That is the moment I can save your friend from the forces of chaos! Choose...stop fighting me, accept me...or see your friend die."

"No." Heinrich whispered coarsely. "I...I'm not going to give you control! This is my body! My soul! My will! Maybe you guided my hand until now, but I refuse to let you back into the world! You're nothing but a spiteful man filled with hatred!"

"And who told you this, huh?" Salazar hissed, his hand removing a wand from his sleeve, "Don't you understand the wand you could bear belongs to me? Made with the hair of a Thestral...they are powerful wands. Only the Elder Wand is similar to it, and of the two I know not which is stronger, I never fought Peverell...but know that should you defeat me...that wand will never be yours."

"So what? I'll have to do with a wand that sparks? Look at how worried I am!" Heinrich taunted back his hand moving to his wand that...wasn't there.

"Looking for something, Heinrich?" Salazar said cheerfully, holding within his right hand his wand. "Your wand is so sad you know? You considered her the second best. Always second. Then again she'd be just like you then. The second best! The second twin, the son who was forgotten, the leftover, the refuse, the discarded! Your sister had it all and you didn't, and you Harry Potter, hate your very own self deeply, isn't it?" Salazar mocked him as he spoke, chuckling heartily.

"That's...not true..." Heinrich, no...Harry? No, Heinrich. No, Harry said. "I don't hate myself."

"What is your name I wonder? Heinrich Grindelwald is easier to say than Harry Potter, isn't it? Come on! Try and say it! My name is Harry Potter, my parents aren't dead: they just didn't love me enough to fight back a curse and remember me!"

"STOP IT!" He yelled back, "STOP LYING!"

"And our crybaby begins to cry! I know you Harry! I saw you! The clock ticked because it was being winded! It wasn't going forward, but backwards...and you didn't even realize it. Pitifully obvious...trying to put up a fight against me, of all things...given by Salazar indeed! The darn thing was keeping me out! But now it's dead and all is good in the world. Now I can finally terminate what I should have been doing years ago!"

"No." Harry whispered. "I won't let you."

"Oh? And how are you going to stop me, Harry? I am in your very own soul! You held me long enough for myself to root within your own spirit! You cannot defeat me, for I am Salazar Slytherin, greatest of Hogwarts four! And you are NOTHING COMPARED TO ME! You are but a fly, a flea, a speck of dirt!"

"You're wrong. I'm someone." He whispered.

"Yes? And what are you, Harry? Dursley? Scamander? Grindelwald? Potter? Slytherin or Ravenclaw? Want another founder's surname to add to it?"

"I..." He hissed slowly, "I'm someone..." He added carefully, "I'm someone who doesn't give a damn about names! I AM ME!"

And Harry's eyes snapped open, as he felt his entire body freezing from laying on a cold surface. He blearily brought his hand to his eyes, before touching the ground and pushing himself up slowly. His stomach tightened and lurched, but he could not faint again. He had to go back. He had to...

The last thing he saw was a soft golden shower of flames appearing in front of him, before darkness claimed him once more.

Author's notes

Halloween. The title 'Tide of Darkness', lowering a shield for the forces of chaos, the mysterious voice yelling Salazar and scaring the man-Dementor senseless...an inner struggle that is reaching a climax, a bleak looking future for Hogwarts. Harry however apparently finds a piece of himself, and apparently the watch was working...keeping Salazar out from 'Direct Control'. The indirect one was bad enough then.

Ah...How I love the smell of cooked plots and hooks, don't you?

PS: Maybe I should start looking for a Beta. Anyone interested?

PPS: Tell me what you think of the new summary. If anyone wants to suggest a better one, feel free!

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 15

Lillian felt a soft weight drop on her shoulder. She turned her head to the side, to stare into the dark eyes and the red plumage of Fawkes, Dumbledore's phoenix. She widened her eyes in surprise, but before she could even say a word she was gone from her comfortable spot in the Gryffindor common room. When the twisting and pulling sensation was over, she fell on her knees on a wide and luscious green carpet. One she had seen a long time before.

She was standing in the chamber of secrets, only this one was fully furnished once more. She hesitantly stood up, looking around the room with a mixture of worry and surprise: if she was in there, and Fawkes had brought her there...then had Dumbledore discovered his way inside? If he had, then this was the perfect place to actually ambush her. Had her brother been right? The soft trill of Fawkes brought her attention back up, to the room and more precisely to the bed.

Softly breathing with his eyes closed, Harry was sleeping on the sheets. He was wearing a leather jacket and a thick black wooly sweater. He had dark trousers that ended where black boots began, and his face was so male that he actually seemed dead, sharply in contrast with the dark colors of his clothing. She moved nearer quietly, releasing a breath of relief when she actually saw his chest move up and down slowly. She closed in and gently dropped a hand on Harry's forehead.

He was as cold as ice, sweating and yet at the same time he appeared to be peacefully sleeping. This wasn't good. She wasn't a healer or a medi-wizard. All she could do was go to the infirmary, but if she did then her brother...he was under a kiss on sight order from the ministry. If she did go...they'd probably have him brought to Azkaban, and she hated that place. It was hell on earth and the Dementors...they scared her. She didn't know what to do, and once more she felt extremely weak and ignorant. If the roles were reversed, Harry would probably already have a set of plans.

He was the smart one in Ravenclaw after all. She was the brave Gryffindor. She silently hoped he'd just wake up without a hitch, or at the very least mutter how to help him without having to really go to

her mother's side. Maybe she'd keep the whole thing quiet? An unbreakable vow wouldn't work: her mom would without a doubt insist on knowing who the wounded boy was, and she was smart enough to realize it even if she didn't tell.

She looked pleadingly towards Fawkes, who merely crooned softly before nestling itself like a sort of chicken on Harry's stomach. The phoenix didn't do anything else, and as few minutes that seemed like hours passed, Lillian was starting to decide more and more on calling at the very least her mother.

"Why did you end up here?" She finally whispered to him. "Why did you bring him here, Fawkes?" She asked the phoenix. "Why not somewhere...did Voldemort do this to him?" She hissed. "Did he...did he torture him?"

The phoenix didn't answer. The bird just stood there, before closing its eyes and drifting off to sleep.

"Answer me you overgrown flaming turkey!" She yelled at the phoenix. "What did Voldemort do to him!?"

"Zhertvy." Harry whispered. Lillian's gaze sharply turned to her brother's face. His eyes were now open, the shade of green that belonged to her mother's eyes was there but at the same time it seemed dull, dead even. Those were haunted eyes. How could he look so old when they were twins? He stood up slowly, and she couldn't help but let go of the hand as she felt she was watching some sort of powerful being stir from its slumber. Even in his wake, he didn't show weakness, his muscles and his face was tense as his eyes carefully looked around. It was as if he hadn't even seen her the first time...but then they settled on her once more, and she felt fear.

Those could not be the eyes of her brother. They were similar, but at the same time they just couldn't be. There was something within them...a cold smothering fury that just seemed to be waiting for the right moment to erupt and strike. It was rage that smoldered itself within her brother. She could see it, just like the very same rage she saw every time Sirius looked at professor Snape, the will to do something but the knowledge that it couldn't be done. Her brother was literally emanating it in waves.

Fawkes crooned softly once more, as Harry hissed in an angry but half-choked voice.

"Why here of all places you could choose?"

"Chirp." Fawkes actually replied to her brother, who was apparently holding his fists tightly clenched to the point where small droplets of blood were appearing.

"You knew, didn't you?"

"Chirp." Fawkes nodded slowly.

"Peeves holding the pocket watch huh...a gift from the Grey Lady and the Bloody Baron huh? I should have known better. Who gave Peeves the watch to begin with? You know. You've been around for centuries haven't you?"

"Chirp."

"Stop the bullshit Sophie! Tell me now! Who gave me the damn watch!? Who did the Bloody Baron meet while he possessed my body!?"

She blinked in surprise. Harry was truly ignoring her, in favor of yelling at a phoenix who was apparently answering back to him through chirps her brother could understand. The phoenix wasn't Fawkes too: it was another one. So Harry had a phoenix! That had to make him a light wizard then! Phoenixes didn't stick around with people who used the Dark Arts after all: everything could be solved in an instant then!

To her surprise, the phoenix gently tapped with her beak at something solid within Harry's breast pocket...on something above his jacket. Harry's face suddenly frowned, before his hand moved and touched the air just slightly above his leather jacket. A few seconds later a golden pocket watch now apparently smashed and torn apart came out together with a lump of grey rock, a bezoar, from within the thin nothingness. The phoenix' beak pecked against the grey lump, and as it chipped away the greyish surface...a deep crimson red color came from beneath it.

Harry wasn't holding a bezoar in his hands.

He was holding the philosopher's stone.

Hagrid

"Yer sure it's this way?" He asked the old man. They were walking through a thick canopy of bushes, somewhere deep within the forest of Brocéliande. That at least was what Nicholas Flamel called the forest. He didn't care much about it, but the fact was that the forest looked positively scary. The amount of poisonous snakes, of deep fog suddenly turning into hails of thunderstorms, and the increasingly bizarre weather events wasn't making it easy to trek through it.

He was a half-giant, the giant blood in him did make him incredibly resilient and all, but this forest was testing his limits too. He didn't know why he was actually following the Flamel guy. He could have gone back to Gellert, but between them all he felt more at ease with the alchemist rather than the ex-dark lord. Something about his gut telling him it would be wiser...and considering how it didn't work when he was taking care of dangerous animals, it meant he really had better to believe it.

"The forest of Brocéliande is a wonderful place: filled with magic of all kinds and types. It is where Merlin was entombed, you know? Where it is said that Excalibur rests, hidden from the ploys of men." Nicholas Flamel spoke. "It is a fascinating tale, because I haven't found Merlin's tomb or Excalibur...yet I've been living in this forest for ages."

"Err...Yeah, right ye are." Hagrid muttered, avoiding yet another poisonous snake.

"Worry not: the snakes are some strange part of the fauna of the forest. Just like the crows and the badgers and the lions. There are a few manticores and nundus, but the dragons keep them away."

"Yeah. Yeah. The dragons." Hagrid chuckled. He was starting to believe there was an apt reason nobody ever found where Nicholas Flamel lived: nobody lived to even see his cottage.

"We're a bit disconnected from the world you know, what with the floo network not reaching till us and the forest naturally preventing

apparition." The centuries old wizard said, "but somehow the important things reach us nevertheless. Just like Dumbledore asking for the Philosopher Stone to study it." Nicholas chuckled at that. "The boy is centuries too young to even think a trick like that could work on me. So imagine my displeasure when I realized he had actually accepted a fake stone...and had stolen the real one?"

"Ye must've been angry," Hagrid muttered, nervously looking down. He carefully sidestepped a nest of poisonous burrowing spiders as he went by, and dusted off his back a giant tarantula.

"Angry didn't just cut it." Nicholas pointed out. "I was furious...but I was actually intrigued when the stone was recovered you know?"

"Huh? You didn't get it back?" Hagrid asked perplexed.

"Oh no: someone else got it beforehand and gave it to me. I was planning on storming Hogwarts and take it back, but someone got there a hell of a lot sooner...and that someone asked for really a nothing in return. Yet it did bring me to think again. I've got centuries of stuff in my head: you have to understand it takes me a while to remember some things." He half-jokingly said.

"So I was there, thinking just why someone needed a pocket watch with Occlumency protections when I realized I simply couldn't remember who had asked for it! I just knew I had to build one, and that, that got my curiosity. I started to look around. I found small traces at first, nothing too serious. Every step of the way my mind was trying to get me to change idea, but I simply told the curse to sod off and kept on looking. In the end I broke through it. Everything can be broken with the right knowledge after all."

Finally the forest gave way to a small meadow, where a happy looking cottage with a bright pink roof stood. There was a small garden and an orchard, and the chimney was letting out small clouds of smoke. It was the perfect rustic setting.

"So yer saying ye built a watch for someone right? What does that have to do with Gellert?"

"Oh absolutely nothing! That's the grand thing of it all! Gellert doesn't know about it, he isn't counting on it and he doesn't know about just what Harry has to face! It's so grand I found myself looking at the

entire thing mesmerized...better than a novel I must say. Think about it: you have Harry, then you have Voldemort who somehow got Harry to disappear, then you have Salazar Slytherin himself trying to take control of Harry, then you have the Bloody Baron, Henry Slytherin by the way, trying to protect Harry together with the Grey Lady. If that isn't enough, we have even Gellert Grindelwald himself using Harry to make a prophecy come true! The poor boy..." Nicholas Flamel chuckled, "Oh, I'm sure you're curious on how I know this, right?"

"Err...Actually I'd hav'ta go ya know..."

"Well, it's not really a long story..." Nicholas Flamel pointed out, "I just tweaked the watch a bit." The old man shrugged. "And I get everything. I have seen everything that has happened since the very beginning, and with a friend of mine at Hogwarts to begin with, it was all extremely easy..."

"Why're you telling me this?" Hagrid finally blurted out as he stopped in the middle of the alchemist's garden. "Shouldn't ya be worried I'll go to Dumbledore or Gellert?"

"When you reach my age, you start to realize that subtlety is overrated." Nicholas shrugged. "The really important thing is to keep Salazar away from the real world...He must not return, which is why I'm going to need you to do something for me soon." The old man spoke, "Something extremely important."

"What's it gonna be?" The half-giant asked curious, if it helped Harry and wasn't for Voldemort or Gellert then he was certainly going to be in on it.

"I like your spirit! You see, somebody stole a bit of the philosopher's stone before giving it back. Nothing much, but if Salazar manages to get his hands on it...you know how bad it would be? So I need you to get it back."

"Oh! Al'right! Where do I start looking!?" Hagrid exclaimed cheerfully.

"That's the problem you see." Nicholas began, "I have no idea, but I do know that someone has to warn Dumbledore and Gellert and Voldemort and whoever else wants it that a piece of the stone is free to be taken...actually, anyone but Salazar can use it for all I care.

Salazar is the only one who must not come back to life. Understood?"

"Uh? But...Wait a minute! I ain't gonna help..." As Hagrid took a step backwards, Nicholas Flamel turned on the spot with a bright, pearly white smile.

"Why...How amusing it is that you think you have a choice." Flamel's wand was already there, pointing at him. He widened his eyes as he moved to get to his umbrella in time when he heard a single word that sent shivers down his spine.

"Imperio."

Gellert Grindelwald/Basileus Sfor

The clock was ticking. The pendulum tower was so much Poe-like that it was kind of revolting to see, and yet there he was, looking once more at the castle from its place. Hagrid had not reported back, meaning that he now knew without reasonable doubt that someone was going to play a trick on him. It wouldn't take much to know that Gellert could free himself from his prison...so he had already started Nurmengard's wards once more. The fortress would be impenetrable to all but him, and those who entered would find it even more difficult to leave.

When one had the weekend at Hogsmeade, it came surprisingly easy to apparate out and back in. Nurmengard would be a death trap, and with the Inferi actually patrolling the inner corridors, it would be even more gruesome. He had been correct. The girl-who-lived hadn't been able to give out the names of the aggressors, and while the Gryffindors had vehemently refused to admit their fault, going as far as to actually start ignoring the Potter whelp, tensions were rising. Sparks were flying in the air, and the lower years were getting more and more violent with the passing of time.

The older years instead were working in a different manner. The Hufflepuffs were sticking together with the lower years, making sure they got to their lessons without troubles. The Slytherins were training their own to hold their ground. The Gryffindors were trying their best to appear as 'brave' and 'noble' as possible...and the Ravenclaws? Well, they were looking at him for inspiration and for orders, and he would not delude his troops again.

His eyes moved to the forbidden forest. The next lesson about magical creatures for the fifth Hufflepuff and Ravenclaw years would truly become interesting, considering Kettleburn had finally gone senile enough to bring out the Hippogriffs. He smiled to himself as he watched the pendulum swing back and forth. He liked this spot. He had never been at Hogwarts before, during his time as Gellert. Never stepped much around England to begin with, but since becoming a 'student' in the school...

The clock tower attracted him. The massive pendulum swinging slowly and the giant watch signaling the passing of time had actually been the first thing he had laid his eyes upon while on the boat. Durmstrang never was this magical. The school he had gone to had merely been that: a rigid and cold school that held no magic, nothing out of the ordinary, nothing special and nothing at all important...well, barring her good fortune of course.

Yet Hogwarts was different. The very lake pulsed with magic just like the giant squid. The castle's halls were all filled with secrets ranging from small etchings on a stone brick to secret doors that would lead to mysteriously hidden rooms filled with different things and wonderful trinkets. The towers and the dungeons held something akin to deeply hidden lore within them, just waiting for the right person to come and see what truly hid behind the façade. Of all the towers, however, the clock tower was special.

He felt something akin to comprehension from it. Just like him, the giant stone structure had seen the passing of time and generations perched atop its hill. The pendulum had swung for centuries, and it would still keep on swinging for centuries more. What a boring job to do, going back and forth, back and forth...and yet so hypnotic to watch, like people walking along on the roads from a window. The old man's sport of people watching from behind windows wasn't actually stupid. It was some sort of bitter thing. To imagine the road they looked at how it was in their young years, to see people walk where they had to crawl, to see people smile and talk to friends and family and knowing that theirs were waiting for them on the other side.

It was in those moments, that he actually remembered why he was doing this. When he was young, magic was powerful and felt so vivid into his very bones. He could see the townspeople walk about

lazily and he knew he'd always be different from them, superior even. His arrogance brought him to experiment, and his experiments brought him to discover something he shouldn't have.

He had lied to Harry. He knew it and yet he couldn't find it within himself to break the vow he had made to the professors. Truly, what fifth year student can manage to outwit and outgun an entire faculty of professors on a ship school? None. He had been given permission to leave in exchange for his silence. He had gone to England to his aunt to be safe, not because he had been exiled there...and there was where he had met Albus. Had he known the viper's true soul beforehand, he probably would have done things differently. Would Harry actually manage though? October was nearing, and if he knew something about prophecies, it was that they had a strange way of working...but they always worked nevertheless.

He who holds the three fortresses of darkness shall bring forth its spawns.

The sons of a bloody past will obey the chosen of their lord.

The betrayed will come to him who holds their kin as their own.

The drinkers of life shall rise to the call of the master of Snakes.

Together, they shall open the path to the sunken city,

There the sins of the past shall be cleansed to all and the wicked present shall rise,

Those betrayed will have justice served, and their souls shall be purified,

But he who opens the gates shall not be granted leave...

For the darkness will claim his soul in eternal torment.

He had done considerable evil in all of his life, but by finding the sunken city, by finding Atlantis or Ys or whatever city it was...he'd be forgiven. He knew not what magic hid itself from the knowledge of man, but if it was powerful enough to forgive all of his sins, then he would gladly grasp at it time and time again. He'd condemn

someone else to hell, but in the end what was one more soul, when he had millions to answer for that would be cleansed?

Bellatrix Scamander

Her Harry was probably afraid. She knew her son would be scared senseless. It had taken her a long, long time to come up with a way to get into Hogwarts. She knew better than to assault head on after all. Sure, she could apparated inside, but how long until Dumbledore found her? The wretched monster destroyed her family: he'd pay for it, oh if he'd pay for it. She had given her priceless cup to Harry, it had been a gift from Voldemort himself and she'd have to punish her son for having dared escape with it. Maybe she'd hug him first and then punish him, before hugging him again and then punishing him once more.

No, first she'd have to punish him, because he had to learn to never do something like that again. Killing muggleborns with a basilisk! Of course she would be proud of him! Yet he could have at least been more subtle about it...but subtlety was for Slytherins, not for her precious smart Ravenclaw son. A pity he hadn't been sorted in Slytherin.

Well, once she'd get her hands on him she'd never let him go to that wretched school again. He was her son: why couldn't she teach him personally? She had already prepared the plans for all the years of studying they'd do. She'd start off by teaching him how to survive the pain of multiple crucio, how to get through torture and then maybe move on to other subjects along the line.

She was in Brazil now. Getting her hands on a powerful concoction of poisons and cursed herbs that she would then carefully mix and store in a tiny vial. Then she'd bath a tiny, really tiny, needle in it. Then she'd send the needle together with a small curse and a stuffed animal to the Girl-Who-Lived. Sure, she had thought about just apparating at Hogwarts where the girl was and using Avada Kedavra on the whore's daughter, but then it wouldn't have been subtle. She didn't want her lord to be angry at her. Just like she knew her precious son didn't want her to be angry at him.

She'd punish him nevertheless, until he learned not to anger her anymore.

A few seconds later she felt something on her forearm prickle. She stopped where she was, in the shady dirty alleyway in the middle of a nowhere muggle district in Brazil. Of all places she would feel the Dark Mark...something was nearby, something that made it flare and blaze.

She began to follow the sensation all the way through dirty districts and roads, through filth and horrendous muggle children that seemed to love the idea to try and nick something from her and that instead found out what missing a limb or two meant by the end of their tries. She didn't even find it funny when the dirty streets gave way to the beautiful and well-guarded mansions. She didn't ponder on anything at all as the mark on her forearm grew far more uncomfortable as a sort of pressure settled on it. She gritted her teeth and walked forward.

She ended up opening the gates of a massive villa with a whispered Alohomora, moving towards the back garden with a sort of finality she didn't think she possessed. Someone was calling to her right there and then, and she had to do her part.

She actually reached a nicely sized pool with crystal clear water, and an old man sipping a cold glass of something dark under the shade of a parasol with his legs in the water of the pool. She blinked at the sight of the probably seventy year old man that didn't look a year above fifty. She blinked because she'd recognize those eyes anywhere, just like she'd recognize that hair style and that face. More importantly, she'd recognize that soothing and mellow voice and that half wicked smile even in the depths of hell itself.

"Ah...My darling Bellatrix...it has been a while."

The old man...the old man whose real name was Tom Marvolo Riddle smiled at her and for once Bellatrix's brain caught her up on one single logical thought.

She tried to run.

She didn't make more than a single step.

Harry

Maybe he was hallucinating. The fact that Sophie of all things had deemed it necessary to bring him there, in the chamber of secrets, was nothing short of imbecilic. How was he going to get Hermione out of Durmstrang then? For what it mattered just why of all things was Sophie looking at him with a sort of hopeful gaze? What did the bird want now that it required him having the philosopher's stone of all things in his hands!?

It was a bit smaller than he had imagined it, but then again he could kill someone with a stick. Who was he to compare sizes and the effectiveness of the instrument based on it? He could literally destroy physics with a flick of his wand, so why was he bothered by the size of the philosopher's stone? He looked at the red piece with curiosity, his eyes transfixing themselves on it.

The golden watch stood now broken and actually fuming to the side of the bed, having fallen as he had slowly stood to a sitting position on the sheets. The stone felt cold to the touch. It wasn't as if he was expecting it to be warm, but something was better than just...that. It was a stone. A nice red color maybe, but just that, a stone.

For but a second, he felt something crawl deep within his own skin, trying to come out. He shivered as he fought whatever it was back in before pocketing the stone, the philosopher's stone, once more. The sharp intake of breath from his side finally brought him back to his normal senses.

There was someone in the room with him, and last he had checked only one person could enter Salazar's room. He twisted his own body as he jumped out of bed, hand going to his wand. The dark wood of Salazar's wand cracked and creaked under his hand, as he gritted his teeth at the sheer pain of holding the wand. He dropped it in an instant, holding his wrist as he opened his palm. A sharp line of burned flesh stood where the wood had come into contact with his skin. The wand hunged lifelessly from the duelist chain, without giving even a hint of life.

Lillian hadn't apparently thought about getting her own wand out, since all she did was hover near him with a worried look. Maybe she had for once listened to him? Maybe she had finally taken some brain cells and used them? He mentally winced at his accusations. He hadn't talked much to his sister: it wasn't as if he actually knew her. Still, he turned around feeling the soft fabric of the invisibility

cloak hang loosely on his shoulder as some sort of royal mantle, and in doing so he realized that no, he wasn't turning invisible.

The invisibility cloak stood in all of its silvery glory with the etched symbol of the deathly hallows on its center on his back, the cowl having retracted on the back of his head. It twirled and swished around him like it was made of liquid water, and as his sister looked at it in awe he couldn't help but feel slightly queasy.

This wasn't supposed to happen. The cloak wasn't supposed to do this and, like with all unknown magical objects...he was starting to worry.

The cloak lurched one last time, and then a face erupted from within it. The face was soon followed by the upper bust, and as the cloak itself molded into a humanoid form...Harry stared at the cloak-like body of Salazar Slytherin, looking at him. Lillian screamed, as the cloak-figure's eyes, or what was apparently molded as empty eye sockets winced. It was like watching a figure being pressed against a veil, letting only the general shape to be seen.

He looked in fear at the thing that was apparently clasped around his neck and moving. His hands went to unclasp the cloak but it would just not unclasp. He actually bled from his thumb when instead of managing the feat he unwillingly touched the silver needle of the clasp itself.

"Stop," Salazar hissed, "And listen you ungrateful whelp."

"Get out of the cloak!" Harry yelled back, "Even better, get out of my life!"

"Give me the stone and I will." Salazar replied mockingly. How could he talk without vocal chords? Lillian's face slowly morphed into one of panic and fright, before the girl hastily clenched her wand and pointed it at the cloak.

"L...Let go of my brother Voldemort!" She yelled, her lips trembling.

"Tell the idiot I'm not my heir would you?" Salazar muttered, gesturing towards Lillian who apparently lost her composure at the cloak-figure's arm movement.

"DIFFINDO! VERDIMILLIOUS TRIA! DEPULSO! EXPELLIARMUS!" Lillian literally screeched at the cloak, the spells passing straight through the figure without doing as much as a scratch.

"Stop!" Harry yelled back at his sister, "It won't work. The cloak is a Deathly Hallow. They're immune to all types of magic..."

"Good. I was growing tired." Salazar mumbled as Lillian lowered slightly her wand, her eyes narrowing as she still looked with a bit of distrust at the cloak-figure.

"A Deathly Hallow?" She asked her voice hesitant, "It looks like..."

"Well, it is your cloak if that was your question." Harry answered back immediately before mentally slapping himself: he didn't even know why he was actually speaking to her! "I nicked it off Ron, and that's all at the moment...unless you've learnt Occlumency?" When the girl didn't answer, he knew she hadn't.

"Look...I have to go before they realize I'm gone. Sophie apparently thought I'd be safe here in order to recover, but if I don't go back immediately they'll think I was in with Hermione." He spoke carefully. "Just keep training on Occlumency all right?"

"I'm still here you know?" Salazar muttered. "I'd like the philosopher's stone now."

"Harry...are you really sure? What about..." Her eyes trailed again to the strange cloak-like figure that was apparently unheard by the girl.

"It's not your problem." He replied curtly before eying Sophie who thrilled indignantly before flying over to where he was and landing on his arm. "Study Occlumency, master it...and never be alone with Dumbledore if you can avoid it."

Lillian was about to say something else, he knew it by the way she had opened her mouth to speak, but Sophie had already begun teleporting him. In the end he reappeared silently in his room, the light filtering in from outside showing him that it was morning already.

Standing in front of the door of his room however, Elmo was staring at him with a dumb and surprised look. Harry frowned at the sight of

the plumb boy's open mouth as he pointed his finger towards him, the phoenix and the mysterious cloak-figure that was still hovering behind him.

"Elmo." He said slowly, "It's a really long story."

"No shit." The Italian boy replied. "The professors wanted to know if you had been in your room all night...I told them yes." He added carefully, "Know enough of the Cosa Nostra to know when to keep quiet." He flashed a hesitant smile. "And...I think I don't actually want to know, Heinrich...I'll leave you alone, all right?" Then, ever so slowly, the Italian boy walked out closing the door behind him.

Harry blinked.

"That was actually the intelligent thing to do." Salazar deadpanned, as his form slowly dissolved into the normal looking cloak that turned invisible.

"Where the hell are you going!?" Harry exclaimed, turning his neck to try and look at the cloak.

"To think...petulant child." Salazar snorted.

"How are you doing this?" He asked again, "Just why are you here to begin with? I mean...how, why, when and where?!"

"You forgot the what." There was a slight underlining of humor in the voice, something that made the creeps rise along Harry's back.

"You'll tell me what the hell is going on, right?"

"Maybe...go to your lessons now child, and leave me to my thoughts."

Harry groaned, clenching his fists as he looked at the calendar. It was with a startled realization that he suddenly remembered about Hermione. Had she left him there in the docks and escaped? He did end up covered by the invisibility cloak, right? So maybe she had simply been unable to find him. It could pretty much be that. Then again he had been fighting against Salazar...who was apparently now tightly attached to his cloak.

The sad thing was that he couldn't just walk up to the headmaster and say that he had Salazar attached to his back now, could he? He actually thought about it for a second...just how mad did it sound, to claim that?

He clenched his fists and then distended them. He had the philosopher's stone in his left hand. He had the stone that could turn things to gold and prolong life in his hand...and Salazar wanted it, apparently after having tried and failed at getting his body. Of all things, he was in Durmstrang, Hermione was probably already babbling to the international police or dead, and Elmo had seen him in full out bizarre appearance.

There wasn't much of a choice.

He'd just have to wing it as he went.

...As always.

Author's notes

chuckles

Well, some of the members of the old 'cast' are going to be leaving us soon after all, it wouldn't do to proceed without showcasing the 'new' ones now, would it?

The Voice apparently is Nicholas Flamel. Good! Yet why did he help in the beginning and now is apparently dead set on people looking for the bit of stone remaining? What is his reasoning to hate Salazar? The watch was destroyed from the effort of battling Salazar, and with it the Voice's gaze on the boy has disappeared just as Salazar tries to stake claim on the little bit of Philosopher's stone.

How did he manage to enter the Deathly Hallow? What will happen on Halloween? Is Harry strangely turning sane or something has gone wrong once more? Bellatrix saw someone didn't she? Or was she just hallucinating?

Why is Gellert attracted to the clocktower, and what truly is the sunken city and its holdings? If October is going to be explosive, just you wait until Christmas!

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 16

The professors at breakfast eyed him with curiosity, but he ignored them as he went on his normal routine, as if nothing had really happened. He knew they probably held a mixture of doubt about his actions the night before, but it wasn't as if he'd come out clean and tell them just what he had done. Hermione was missing from her lessons, and yet nobody was seemingly caring about it. He hadn't asked yet any of her roommates, as he was in wait for Karkaroff to actually contact him to explain whatever lies would work for Jean's disappearance.

"The Zhertvy will take care of the excuses." Salazar whispered helpfully in his ear. He mentally flinched but kept his gaze normal and downcast on his notes. He had many questions, but he couldn't just ask them easily without creating a problem. If he was overheard, it might spell far more trouble than it was worth.

"What do you mean?" He whispered just as the Tactics professor began to explain the benefits of flanking an enemy's trench.

"Magic controls all. Intent is the soul and blood is the body. Magic flows through us and beyond us. The Zhertvy ritual uses the blood of wizards to force intent, and that is what makes it so powerful. Sacrifice in order to achieve perfection and your intent will be to become perfect. Sacrifice in order to achieve luck and the world will bend its laws to allow luck. Sacrifice in order to allow good fortune, wealth, fame, and you will obtain them all."

He blinked. Sacrifice was the word for Zhertvy. Making sacrifices in order to obtain something, but the real question was to who those sacrifices were made.

"Why?"

"Power a ward through magic and it will eventually be defeated or avoided. It is instead harder to deflect the intent of protection. It is all encompassing. You can bring up a wall to guard a city, but one who can fly can pass above it, and one who can dig can pass beneath it. Give the city the intent to be protected, and neither will come to the

realization that they can fly or dig their way through. They will see a wall and they will stop there."

"It's like brainwashing, right?" He murmured, as his left hand opened and closed in anxiousness. He felt this sort of thing familiar: after all he had been forced through the same thing during his youth, hadn't he? It was kind of funny to consider the previous years his 'youth' since he was anything but young in his mind. Was this how child soldiers felt? Growth comes from hardships apparently, and he had done a lot of the latter and little of the first. He wondered when a growth spurt would hit him and finally make him tower over the rest of the rambling masses. He narrowed his eyes for a moment.

"Indeed."

"You just entered my mind to get the knowledge of 'brainwashing'." He accused coolly. There was no need to yell in the classroom after all.

"That I did. Your mind is quite hardened if you can feel my intrusions. I was renowned in my times as having the most gentle of touches in mind magic."

He snorted quietly. His hand was automatically scribbling notes he knew he wouldn't even read. He did need a plan though.

"You know where the Zhertvy takes place?" He whispered.

"Indeed I do. I know where your friend has been taken and I know much more. I have no qualms in helping you, as long as I receive my fare."

"The philosopher's stone." He mumbled as his brain wracked itself over the stone. It gave one long life and turned things gold, but it couldn't resurrect specters now, could it? Well, if 'Specter' was actually the name for what Salazar currently was.

"What do you need it for?"

"To pay the ferryman and remain upon this world. You heard his voice, have you not? Only within this Hallow am I safe from Death itself."

He suddenly felt a creeping sensation of cold within his soul as he shivered. Sure, he could say 'death' a thousand time and feel nothing, but the way Salazar said it, it was as if he didn't really mean the 'death' one portrayed but something grander and more horrible. It was like the difference between saying 'Abracadabra' and 'Avada Kedavra'. Both words were similar and yet so different at the same time.

"Will you kill people?" He asked after biting his lip in an effort for calm.

"The only thing I abhor is death. Had I not been betrayed I wouldn't even be in this situation. Worry not for I care nothing about this present world or its muggles. They're getting more apt at killing each other with the passing of years, why should I actually bother when they're doing such a grandiose work by themselves?"

He would have wanted to ask how the specter knew about that, but he already had his suspicions on his brain being read time and time again by Salazar. Probably he had read the news of some war that Harry had barely skimmed by to read the comics of the newspaper page. Or maybe he wasn't that unconnected to the world as he wanted to make it seem. He was a ghost: for all he knew they could have some sort of ghost-like postman that delivered a ghost newspaper.

He shook his head slowly to clear it from such thoughts, as he finished scribbling in the last notes on superior firepower. The professor dismissed the class with a curt goodbye and he was out of there in a second. He could actually hear the swishing sound of the invisibility cloak behind his back, thankfully invisible. He just hoped nobody would step on it as he walked through the corridors.

"Fine." He muttered, "Help me and the stone is yours."

"Write down a contract when you have the time. I'll sign it afterwards." Salazar spoke in a light murmur. "Never trust words, only contracts laden with magic and might."

"Yes mister paranoia." He mumbled back. How would he go about writing a contract of all things? A massive headache slammed into his head a few seconds later, filling him with the correct forms to compose a binding contract that he felt was foolproof and filled with

so many difficult words he'd need a dictionary to even read it. He blinked and groaned as hissed back.

"Stop this."

"Parseltongue? If you wish a conversation in this noble language just say so. I rather prefer it: it is nobler."

Harry bit his tongue from replying to Salazar. What was there to say? He'd take the contract knowledge with a pinch of salt and work something simpler that he too could understand. How difficult could it be to write something that held a simple thing such as 'Help me out and I give you the stone'?

As it turned out, it took him most of the afternoon to come up with the correct phrasing of the contract and most of the night to write it correctly. Elmo had spent the entire time lost in thoughts and was slightly distant from him even at lunch or dinner. The Italian boy seemed lost in thoughts of some sort, but he didn't apparently come up with them for that day.

He was actually grateful for that: finishing the last touches of the contract with Salazar and signing it, it came all down to a surprisingly easy to understand form.

Salazar would just go his way without interfering on the muggle world for as long as the muggle world didn't interfere with him. Furthermore in exchange for helping him interrupt the Zhertvy ritual and save Hermione, Harry would deliver the philosopher's stone and help Salazar reacquire his life. That was what he had managed to understand from it, and he sincerely hoped there was no secret clause placed while he wasn't looking.

There was no glowing magic or soft humming noise as both signed it, Salazar actually creating from the invisibility cloak a small silver hand with its strands and using it to put his name on the paper. Just as the ink finally dried off, the contract rolled on itself and then disappeared in a puff of smoke.

"Nothing else?" Harry asked hesitantly.

"If you'd rather have fireworks and light shows, feel free to invent your own contracts." Salazar rebuked him without actual anger in his

voice. Before Harry could answer back however, the cloak-figure began to talk.

"Your best bet is to wait for the Thirty-First of October. Use the invisibility cloak to follow Karkaroff around on that day and then reach for the Zhertvy primary runic array. Once in there I'll give you further instructions."

He nodded quietly to himself, before finally asking.

"What about the watch?"

"What about it?" Salazar ironically asked back, "I'll keep your brain and your thoughts safe...but learning Occlumency would not be a problem now...I'll help."

"You're...different." Harry whispered, "I mean...from what books say."

"History is written by the winner...and by the one who can tell the tale."

James Potter

Peter Pettigrew had escaped from Azkaban. James crumbled the small paper slip that told him the news. Working on a hint by Albus the ministry had begun looking through the graves of the inmates. Peter had been meant to be killed by the kiss, but he had somehow escaped that fate. James knew of course how the man could have managed that: he was an animagus, he could transform into a rat. Dementors didn't like animals, and usually they ignored them entirely.

He suspected Peter had managed to hide in Azkaban for a long time, but now...now he knew he had also escaped the island. He knew because he could feel the tip of a wand pointed at the back of his neck. He knew because the man in question was holding him hostage in his own office. He knew, in the end, because the man had been talking non-stop for the past few minutes.

"I'm sorry James." The man that he once called friend spoke, "I'm sorry. I didn't think this would happen. He said the Dark Lord wouldn't kill you if I talked. He said you'd be out of the house. He

said a lot of bullshit to me and I believed him but you have to understand: my mother..."

"Peter." He spoke carefully, "Lower your wand and we'll speak."

"This isn't my wand." The balding man nervously chuckled. "I stole it from one of the students last night. What do you know, you never hand your wand snapped in front of you. Luckily the animagus transformation doesn't require a wand. I ran out of the execution room...the bastard said he'd vouch for me James! He said he'd claim me innocent and working for him all along! He's a liar James: you have to believe me...he's lying!" Peter was literally screaming at the back of his head, and yet all he could do was keep calm and wait.

Eventually Sirius would come around: maybe he was already behind the door just waiting for the right moment to barge in.

"Who is the one lying, Peter? Who are you talking of?" James asked him carefully. It wouldn't do to make the mad man more agitated than he actually was. As long as he kept it calm and cool everything would be solved.

"Dumbledore."

James couldn't help but snort at that.

"Try again Peter. Dumbledore vouching for you? You betrayed us! You sent Voldemort to our home!"

"He ordered me to!" Peter yelled back, "You have to believe me James! He told me to give the address to Voldemort. He said the order would spring a trap for him, but Voldemort knew that James! Voldemort knew the house was a trap from the start and he went anyway! I don't know why, but..."

James moved quickly, as soon as he felt the tip of the wand remove itself from his neck. His hand swept backwards, throwing Peter on the ground as he grabbed for his wand hand. Peter punched him with his left hand as they both fell on the ground scuffling. He knew he was stronger without a doubt when the man started to transform into a rat to escape his hold. He went for the wand within seconds,

but by the time he pointed it on the spot where Peter stood, the man was no longer there.

A small rat was scurrying his way out of the window, literally running alongside the small overhanging strip of stone that were nothing more than decorations. For the coward that Peter used to be, this was something James had never seen him do. Still, if Peter had managed to enter...he had to have used one of the secret passages that led from Hogsmeade to Hogwarts. James was already running to warn the Headmaster, mentally cursing at the fact that the marauder's map had been lost, when he nearly barreled into Sirius.

His best friend barely managed to duck to the side, and as he kept on running he realized he was following him.

"Prongs! What's the hurry!?" Sirius yelled as he ran behind him.

"It's Peter! He's at Hogwarts!" He charged straight through a few more corridors, before stopping near the stone gargoyle which promptly jumped to the side as if sensing his pressing need to see the headmaster. The few flights of stairs were done in the blink of an eye, and as he stepped inside Dumbledore's office, he looked with surprise at the Headmaster already standing on his feet.

"James, my child, is everything all right?" The old man asked with a kind and worried voice, "Lemon Drop?"

"Not now!" James snarled back, "It's Peter! He's at Hogwarts!"

Albus' eyes narrowed as they lost their spark of amusement that usually characterized them, as they took on the cold and glacial gaze that showed just why the Headmaster could battle Voldemort to a standstill many times during the war.

"I see...the lack of ghosts and portraits must have helped him get inside." Albus muttered, his hand going to his beard, "I will lock down the castle with the wards of course..."

"If it's Peter, then it's too late: he'll probably be in Hogsmeade by now." Sirius cursed. "And we won't find that rat easily again."

"Hogwarts' wards are..." But Albus didn't finish, because Sirius interrupted him again.

"We built a leeway through during our last years." The raven haired man spoke quietly, "The tunnels leading to Hogsmeade...we removed the wards near them, never thought about it but..."

"What." Albus hissed. "What sheer imbecility! What frothing madness are you spouting Mr. Black!?"

James stood in quiet disbelief at the scene of Albus Dumbledore, the kind headmaster, suddenly turning red in face as he actually displayed anger, of all things.

"H...Headmaster...we..."

"No! This folly is something inexcusable! You have put to risk every single student in the school! Had I known this...How long!? For how long have those holes been there!?" The old man suddenly took a deep breath, holding on to his chest and wheezing painfully. "No...This...Why did you not warn me before, Mr. Black, Mr. Potter? How did you forget to mention something so important?"

"It...it slipped our mind?" Sirius hesitated in speaking, his voice half creaking as James knew just how bad it sounded, and how pitiful the excuse was.

"Slipped...No. No, you will now rectify this." Albus began again pointing his accusing finger at both of them, "You will close all holes in the wards you have so stupidly created, and I swear that were the both of you still students, I would have had you all expelled!"

"Yes sir," James said immediately, feeling every bit like a student who was getting lectured by the angriest professor ever, and in a certain way he was right. How could he have forgotten about it? They had carved holes through the wards of Hogwarts in the secret tunnels leading out of the castle, in order to avoid Filch and the staff knowing where they went sometimes at night. They stupidly slipped out with the invisibility cloak to get smashed at Rosmerta during the week when they had no important lessons the next day...he should have remembered it sooner.

Yet now Peter was free, and until they closed all of them immediately, he would probably manage to escape and return as many times as he needed.

"Good. Now go and correct this...later you will tell me what Peter told you, James, but first we must ensure the safety of the students. I will have them sleep in the common hall for the time being. We cannot have risks...not with common rooms not working and the Slytherins up in their tower away from the rest of the student body."

He nodded to the headmaster and walked out quickly, Sirius following him after a few moments. He couldn't help but feel sickened by it all: the idiotic action in his youth could have pretty much cost his life that day, and if not his then most certainly it could have cost the lives of the students, or even of his family! He had to find Peter fast: with his animagus powers it would be an extremely difficult task, but maybe if he could convince Padfoot...

Gellert Grindelwald

"Intent!" He barked at Lillian, who clenched her wand tighter. "Is this all your intent!?" He exclaimed shoving his own wand forward and sending the girl's own to fly in the air and in his palm. "Are you trying to take my wand or are you trying to squat bugs with yours?"

The girl was huffing from the effort, as she held her hands against her knees to catch her breath. Her hair was tied in a crooked ball and she was wearing large loose gym clothes. Her muggleborn mother had probably packed those too, not that it mattered what the girl dressed in if she couldn't even get the Expelliarmus correctly. Well, technically it wasn't that she didn't know how to cast the spell: it was that she couldn't make it powerful enough to pass through his shield.

He took a sip of 'water' from his flask, before sending a small bitter frown in her direction.

"Maybe we should stop, if this is all you can do for the day..."

The girl wheezed one last time, before shaking her head firmly and standing back up.

"I can go again!" She insisted. Her face was red from the effort, and her forehead was covered in sweat, yet she apparently didn't want to drop: the needless ideal to be equal to her brother, to challenge him and stand by his side...stupid, yet understandable. To stand

shoulder to shoulder with the titans that mark the world with their passage is a dream that many profess in their sleeping hours, but how many actually reach it? How many can say to have truly carved a niche in history, in time and space? He was one, and undoubtedly, eventually, Heinrich would be one too.

She had already done something of course, Lillian Potter, the Girl-Who-Lived...yet was that true praise? To survive against an opponent is something that any soldier can do, it was nothing special and eventually someone would have managed anyway. You just can't kill everyone and be done at the first passage. Humans have the nasty tendency to survive and be harder than weed to pluck out. They'll cling to life for as long as they can draw breath.

He knew it. There was just nothing like remembering the screams of the muggles he transfigured into horrendous monsters of flesh who begged not for death, no...but to live. Even in their towering deformities they'd rather live than die. Did death scare them so much? He wouldn't know, for he did fear it once, but now all that he willed was for redemption.

He launched her wand back and then began again. The girl moved with more strength than grace. She was strangely bulkier in her movements than Heinrich. He was already seeing the differences between the two. Heinrich didn't move much: overwhelming power was his answer, and if that failed then even more power was needed. The girl tried to look for the weak points in the shield and apply herself to them. She failed of course, but it didn't stop her from trying new angles.

She moved on the battlefield, but now with the purpose that Heinrich had. Heinrich planned and then executed, the girl executed and improvised on the spot. There was only instinct in her moves: it wasn't bad, but it also wasn't enough to win against him. Not that she could mysteriously disarm him of his wand without him wanting it to happen. There just wasn't a way. This wasn't a story where the young budding heroine gets powerful through a twist of luck that sends Excalibur in her hand.

Once more, the girl's wand departed from her hand, albeit this time it was a few seconds later. She was improving, not much, but she was and it was undeniable. He pocketed his wand in his sleeve, before

starting to walk towards the girl. He handed over her wand, and then replied with a small smile, his usual charming smile.

"Well done. See that if you will it, you can do it?"

"I still lost the wand." She pouted back, opening and closing her red hand.

"Yes, but this time you held it even as your skin was scraped off." He replied with his gaze settling on where the wound had been given. "That is the mark of a warrior. The circle is the mark of the coward and the triangle is the mark of the wise."

"Eh?"

"Nothing important," he shrugged, "Did something happen? You're usually a chatterbox during our little lessons." His eyes gazed into those of Lillian for but a second, but it was enough to know it concerned her brother, as always. It was as if the girl didn't have any other friend her age! There was the Weasley brat and the Lavender girl with the Parvati one, if he wasn't wrong...yet she didn't even seem to consider them worthy of her attentions. She wanted to be found good out of her own merits, not because she was the Girl-Who-Lived. To prove herself to someone who actually didn't consider her famous was her real desire. He'd need the mirror of Erised to be sure, but he'd wage quite a bit in it being the truth.

"I...Well," she began hesitantly, "I received a letter from Harry recently."

"Oh?" He raised an eyebrow. It couldn't be about him, or the girl would have probably confronted him first thing first. She wasn't subtle at all, and he doubted she'd stay silent with him actually teaching her. He'd even give her points if she instead had known of his real identity and still came: it would display her ruthlessness in getting what she needed, no matter who provided it.

"Yeah. He's getting stronger and stronger and he said he'd tell me everything once I got Occlumency down...But Occlumency is illegal so it isn't as if I'm training on it!" She blurted out quickly, looking shyly away. He rolled his eyes at the imbecilic attempt at changing the argument.

"Oh? Well, of course you wouldn't be training on it." He remarked offhandedly, "One needs to be repeatedly assaulted to form mental scarring after all...well, more than mental scarring, should we call it magic scarring?" He began to speak with his usual 'theoretical' approach, "Opening up the mind and freeing it of thoughts when someone else attempts the Legillimency scars the mind's magic, and makes it more difficult for a successive attempt to work. Rinse and repeat, and a wizard can have such a scarred mind that no attempt will ever work."

"So...You can't learn it alone?" She meekly whispered.

"Now, I didn't say this did I? All one needs is the proper tool." He shrugged back, "Something that read the mind of the observer for example, like the mirror of Erised, or just in general an object that tries to influence the wizard. The stronger the influence is and the heavier the scarring that will result. In the end the brain is a powerful instrument, it cannot regenerate itself, but it always finds a way to work. Humans are naturally resilient like that. We're a bit short of being called fungus actually." He chuckled at the joke that the girl didn't understand. She did laugh nervously at it though, but it wasn't as if he cared if she laughed or not.

He assaulted her mind all-out, realizing just why she had to learn Occlumency and at the same time hearing her gasping and flinching away.

"Get out!" She exclaimed closing her eyes shut. "You...You read my mind!"

"The map." He hissed, all pretenses gone. "Where is the map?"

"I'm not..."

"I am not giving you a choice, child."

And indeed...he did not.

Heinrich Grindelwald

Two days to Halloween, and Elmo had yet to talk to him. Other sea battles had come and gone, but with all the ships and classes they had yet to get back in the water. Battling more than twice a month

was a surprise. Igor hadn't called him, and Salazar's words had struck true. The wards were just like the Fidelius charm he had been subjected to, but with the creator of the wards themselves protecting him, he could see the differences.

Orphans and wards of the state were abducted. People didn't mind their disappearances and many just claimed them gone during the vacations. The kidnappings in Mexico brought the blood of muggles to increase the life aspect, while the mud-bloods were used carefully. Hermione had probably been selected because her 'persona' of Jean Gregorovitch was an orphan: no questioning needed afterwards.

He was carefully cleaning his plate of food for dinner, when a raven of all things decided to land on his shoulder. Well no, it wasn't a raven. It was Machiavelli. Half-singed and half burned, the hybrid owl had actually found the guts to fly back. Not only had the thing flown back to him, but he was apparently carrying a message tied to its beak. Probably they didn't trust the owl with the leg.

"How?" Harry found himself asking the poultry who merely hooted something eerily similar to a 'HA! You didn't believe me? I'm a prideful owl you pessimistic twat!' albeit it was more probably a 'Water and food please'.

"Hoot. Hoot. Hoot-Hoot-Hoot." The owl scarfed down half a basket of bread before finally deigning herself to reply. He merely raised an eyebrow before opening the letter carefully. He was rewarded with a small glinting gold band with a silver engraving on it. A small W stood there, surrounded by etched engravings of small animals.

"Wyllt." Salazar hissed in his ears. "That is the ring of Wyllt."

"Uh?" Harry muttered back as he delicately held the ring with both his index and thumb.

"Put it in your pocket and forget about it. It does not bode well. Only...oh ever so cunning in your idiocy are you not? Curse you thrice then." Salazar suddenly mumbled, speaking to someone else probably. "It matters not. Leave the ring in your pocket and whatever happens don't put it on. That is all."

He stood up in silence, walking out of the dining hall with calm.

"Care to explain?" He hissed.

"It doesn't relate to getting your friend out. So no, I won't." Salazar deadpanned.

"I can't wait for the day after tomorrow to get rid of you."

"I can't wait too. Finally I'll be free from your arrogant presence."

"I'm the arrogant one?" Harry found himself asking incredulously. "I didn't sign up for this damn stuff I'll let you know!"

"You keep on pretending answers, as if they were your right to know." Salazar hissed back. "A lot of things you will never know, petulant child, and a lot more you will never discover. That is the ugly face of life: for all its wonders, something will always elude your knowledge."

"This would be easy if you cooperated."

"Why? It is unimportant. You are not the center of the universe: some things can go on even without your acknowledgement. You're not the man who moves the pieces, but the chess piece. You may call yourself King, but it is not the King that moves the others: it's the hand behind the board."

He gritted his teeth in frustration. Truly, he just couldn't wait for the thirty-first of October. Sure, he'd be freeing on the world Salazar Slytherin, but at the very least he would no longer hold him in his cloak. He just hoped the man would not turn out precisely like the history books had seen him. The reminiscences he had been receiving displayed more than just the evil side of the coin. He'd hope the man would keep true to his claims of not caring for the muggle world at all.

He silently reached his room and nearly dropped down dead asleep, when a half-lingering thought brought him to quietly place the ring of Wyllt within his pocket, in the place just next to the philosopher's stone. He hadn't put on the ring, but then again what need was there? He was tired of always being flung into another sticky mess to solve: this time would be his very last.

He'd actually go with Hermione's counsel and seek asylum in America after this. How the thought of battling Dumbledore, Voldemort and Gellert actually came into his mind he did not know, but he surely didn't put it there to begin with.

One thing was to fight, another was to seek fights.

As he slept, no dreams of past battles reached his mind, no long lost knowledge and no secret revelation. For all the words that Salazar had told him and for all the things he had learned, storming a secret runic array only Salazar knew where it was, and everything else that piled on him...he slept through the night with ease.

Meager consolation, considering he woke up in a strange and dingy looking cell...with Karkaroff looking at him from beyond the bars.

Life never goes the way it is expected of her after all...but this was borderline psychotic.

Author's notes

And another chapter rolls by. (I'm actually going to give an author's review of the chapter from now on. I find it an interesting way to see if the readers see the words I write as I intend them or not ^_^)

If by now you have started realizing when I'm influencing Harry because of mind-alteration through the words and the thoughts he has, then good! If not...well, you'll see. As you've probably realized he began calling himself Harry once more. It is not by chance. Names and Surnames are important, mind you!

The point of perspective is explained once more by Salazar, who showcases how naïf Harry's thought line is by telling him that even if he considers himself a piece of the board, the hand outside of it is the real leader of the fight.

Meanwhile Peter who had disappeared from the 'writing' radar reappears in Hogwarts, re-enacting a scene in a different key (Sirius entered Hogwarts himself to get to Pettigrew, here it's Pettigrew entering to get to Prongs) and a serious hole is seen (The wards of Hogwarts, having holes? Uhm...why does this sound wrong, especially if it was a bunch of adolescent doing it?)

Gellert realizes there is a major flaw in his hiding, but at the same time receives a boon...a big one probably. And finally the scene returns to Harry two days before the start of the ritual, and finishes with Harry awakening in a cell one day before...hopefully. Going against what Harry had thought about 'the inevitable need to fight' he now thinks more about the 'why should I fight' again, as if the previous growth had been rendered null by something. Or someone. The Why is important, but will it be revealed? We will see.

And the ring of Wyld is a foreshadow... A really big one...(or maybe not) Kind of like the philosopher's stone you know. He had it since first year...

This moment onwards M-Rating is in effect. Character Grow and so does the Theme.

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 17

The cell was badly lit and humid. The stones were covered in at least an inch of dust and grime, and really ancient splatters of blood stood eerie upon the walls. Rusty chains dinged creaking tunes as they moved to an unseen breeze. The haunted and white face of Igor was a show by itself of anxiousness and nervousness, mixed with an unearthly fear of something that made the man flinch right and left every few seconds.

"Wait here, all right? Do not move. I'll talk to Gellert later. He'll get you out. Not now. Don't try and leave got it? Stay in there."

He tried to speak, but his voice did not come out. His eyes narrowed as he rolled his tongue along his cheeks before trying to mumble, and failing that too. He nodded quietly, before taking a deep breath and screaming to the top of his lungs. Nothing came out again, and with that Igor merely showed a small smile.

"The cells are soundproof and I silenced you. You have no way out kid: just wait for Gellert to get you out. I'll tell him I did a good job in keeping you alive till now, but the mudblood had to be sacrificed. The Zhertvy is needed you know? Without it we'd be nothing more than a foul stench-filled boat, but it brings luck, good fortune and prosperity. What are a few corpses more if it makes hundreds study and learn? Nothing: and if they belong to mudbloods, to muggle filth and the likes? Who cares for them!" Igor chuckled to himself, before turning to leave.

"Not that you'll remember our little talk once I'm done obliterating you, but I won't do it now...I'll let you wallow in fright for a good day, then maybe I'll let you see the ritual too? That would be good." The man smiled as he slowly walked away, the noise of his footsteps suddenly stopping for a second out of his sight.

"Your precious friend is going to see you die, there is no hope for you pathetic filth." Igor's voice rattled with a few more uneasy

bouts of laughter, before Harry heard the man spit and then, finally, heard him open and close a creaking door.

A dreadful silence descended in the prison block, interrupted only by the noise of the torches that flickered few tendrils of light in the otherwise dark and dreadful corridor. Harry closed his eyes, his ears straining themselves to hear the light sobs coming from the cell a few meters to his side. He could hear the flapping of the invisibility cloak coming to pass, its liquid like embrace covering him as he slipped into a state of concentration.

He carefully wobbled up on his feet, blood rushing to his head as he firmly grasped onto his Heliopath wand that began to spark and release a thick stream of fire.

"What were the chances?" Salazar hissed to his ear as his wand's flame began to attack the iron bars. "What indeed that you'd keep your wand, that it would be able to do so without words, that you'd be able to move sooner than expected? What indeed..."

Harry ignored Salazar's voice. He felt the pull to move after all, and he knew that when that happened he just had to let it go. Just like when he had talked down on Ron during the end of the first year. Just like he had acted during his escape from Hogwarts, the thing was the same. Something moved his body and he felt it, and yet he followed it. Maybe he was being compelled by Salazar to act, but he felt euphoric. He could do no wrong as long as he felt the pull.

The cells' wards started to react, as a sort of smothering sensation began to try and pin him down, but he hissed to them in the tongue of snakes.

"The Heir demands passage! Desist!" Something clicked, because within seconds the wards, the thick blanket-like feeling of oppression, slowly disappeared. Salazar did not utter a single word, but Harry didn't bother to hear him. He just kicked open the cell's door and took a step outside. To his right he could see the corridor ending with a wooden door that had suddenly opened again to reveal the worried looking face of Igor Karkaroff, probably alerted by the wards of his breaking out. His face was a mixture of shock and then paling dread.

"Fear the King." He hissed softly as his right hand slowly lifted itself upwards, the invisibility cloak wrapping itself around his body like a coiled snake holding him hidden even as he moved. True invisibility, complete and utter lack of detection...there was no way Karkaroff could see his spells coming. His voice, his normal one, appeared locked away and hidden. The one of snakes however, seemed loose and easy to use. It was as if it was his natural tongue, his natural destined language, his only language.

"How should I kill you, Karkaroff?" He pondered, a smile forming on his lips. "Should I bathe you in poison?" This wasn't his voice, was it? He seemed amused as the smile slowly became more feral, just as the man, his enemy, took out his wand and pointed it to the empty hall.

"Gellert? Is it you? You've acted fast you know!" The man hesitated, "You already took the child right? I'm sorry about the girl but she's chained to the altar with the others so..."

He ran. Straight forward against Igor Karkaroff he ran. He did not think about what he was doing, blood rushing through his head and turning everything red as his wand flared a bright blue light that shot forward against the Headmaster of Durmstrang.

"IGNIS!" Fire. Burn. The towering pillar of twisted and twirling flames sprouted from the tip of his wand as if it was his second call. It was not a precise shot. It was not a thoughtful shot. It was nothing of the sort. It was an attack. An outright, overly powerful, completely imprecise attack and yet Harry felt good in doing so. The flames burned and crackled. Their heat was bristling and made him sweat as he flicked his wand and added a generous fiery downpour more. The flames turned blue in color as he kept on holding his weapon tightly, the vicious smile on his face not leaving him even a second.

He heard a sharp crack and sidestepped, avoiding what would have otherwise been a pretty nasty curse sent his way. Igor wanted to play apparently, and who was he to refuse? A wave of hexes and smaller jinxes followed through the thick fire wall that had seemingly attached itself in the corridor, the heat wave was making him wince, but his wand moved graciously through the usual pattern of his own spells.

"Ico. Trudo. Scutum." The flames flickered as the spells passed through them, granting him small glimpses of where Igor was and how he was faring. The man's Protego was up and going, yet it was already crackling under the effort from spells that were not meant to be blocked by a mere protego. He realized that every spell he cast was strangely turning fiery red as it moved and struck, even the Scutum, the shield spell that used the nearby objects to form, was actually enflamed. It was largely composed of flames though.

"Crucio!" Igor's voice sounded through the hallway, but Harry merely narrowed his eyes more as he met the spell with the Scutum one, letting it infringe as magic met magic, showering sparks where the two collided.

"Trudo." He whispered, as a jet of flames mixed with the spell emerged, hitting his own shield from the back and sending its molten composition forward as if propelled by a rocket. His own hand was slowly turning reddish from the heat and the burns, but he wasn't even feeling it. He was enjoying this. He was enjoying the noise of the fire crackling and the spells flinging all around him. He was enjoying the swishing sound of his robes moving from side to side as he avoided curses and sent back spells to kill. He enjoyed the power. He truly and utterly felt happy.

"Let's give back the coin, should we?" Harry said to no-one in particular as he took a step forward, the flame wall departing as it revealed Igor bleeding from the molten bits of the Scutum spell having been flung at the man. His wand still in hand and still launching spells, while the man slowly tried to scuttle towards the door.

"Do you feel pain, Igor?" He asked the man, who cried but did not listen. Was it difficult to hear him speak? The whimpering sod raised its wand once more, but he merely flicked his own.

"Diffindo." The hand flew in the air as blood sprayed on the stone floor, drying up nearly as fast as it was bled. The screams of pain were soon turned into whimpers, as a Silencio found itself firmly stuck to the man's voice.

"That won't do Igor...can't have you bleed out now, can I?" Harry smiled as a small blue colored flame burst forward, burning the bleeding limb and sending more silenced screams his way. The face

of Igor was contorted in pain, and yet the man had yet to faint. The Headmaster of Durmstrang was probably not ignorant to pain, had he been tortured too once? He didn't much care since this...this felt good. He had the power and the man hadn't. He was younger, knew less in curses than the man himself and yet he was stronger than him. He had the other man at his mercy. He was the top dog.

"I think you need to be punished Igor." He smiled gingerly, "You've been a bad boy." The voice was so twistedly not his that for just a moment, Harry flinched and frowned. The pull then happened again, and he cared not for it any longer.

"Crucio."

The man screamed and yelled as his entire body convulsed in pain. No sound came out of the mouth or the throat or the lungs, and as his wand moved to aim at them, to try and see if holes carved within the man's chest would let the sound out, a powerful stench reached his nose. He looked with distaste at the headmaster of Durmstrang, who had soiled himself. The fires around them crackled with glee as they slowly died out, leaving cinders and ashes behind.

"Had enough, Karkaroff?" Harry asked slowly. "Tried to trap me, did you? Don't you know who I am?" He whispered the question as he walked closer to the man, kneeling in front of him to look at his face. "I'm not going to waste time. I've got things to do you know, important things." He hissed. "Oh? Now I can talk can I?" He blinked with a small smile spreading on his lips.

Igor tried to say something, but Harry merely backhanded him on the ground. "Shut up!" He snarled. "Bad boys don't get to talk! You horrible freak!" He growled standing back up. His eyes turned to the right, where a burnt corpse stood in what had once been a probable frightened expression. Both charred hands were up to cover the boy or the girl's face, and he, for once, closed his eyes carefully.

"I didn't do this." Harry murmured. "You did Karkaroff." He added after a few seconds. "Why did you kill the student Igor?" He queried, "Why did you have to be a murderer Igor? Why?" His wand was moving in a sharp twist before he could even think about what spell to use.

"Just die Igor. You're an insult to humanity." And then, Harry Dursley, or maybe Heinrich Grindelwald, or maybe even more Salazar Slytherin, pronounced a single spell incantation.

"Ignis." The flames burned the man as its dying screams were unheard. He didn't stop though: he had to at the very least reach out of the door, out of the prison block. He had to find where Hermione was, right? Or was it Jean Gregorovitch? He couldn't remember clearly, but he knew better than to stop there and ask someone.

The door opened with a slight creak, revealing to him an empty corridor carved in ice of all things that seemed to lose itself in the pitch black darkness. Whispers and hisses echoed all around him as slowly red snake-like lines of blood glittered a path through the narrow hallway. The lights recognized the heir of Slytherin probably or maybe Salazar himself. He took a step, he took another, and as the door of the prison closed behind him he lurched for the wall and retched on the ground, heaving repeatedly as his stomach emptied itself of everything within it.

He gasped for air as the sick and twisted feeling of what he had done finally caught up with him.

"What...What have I done?" He whispered trembling as his eyes shut close. He shook his head forcefully. When you snap it's not as if you get a notice now, do you?

"What the hell are you blabbering about?" He hissed.

"Who's talking?" He asked looking around. "Salazar?"

Salazar isn't real. You imagined him.

"No, that's not true." Harry retorted hotly.

"Would you move, or do you wish to talk to your reflection in the ice wall for a bit more, Harry?" Salazar's hissed voice reached him from behind the ear, and he took a deep breath of relief. He hadn't imagined Salazar. He wasn't mad. There was no way he could be mad, what reason did he have to become schizophrenic to begin with? He was perfectly fine.

Aren't people who claim to be sane, but mad themselves?

"Stop entering my fucking mind Salazar!" He seethed angrily as he began to stomp on the ground towards where the red snakes were apparently pointing with their bodies. He didn't hear a reply from Salazar and he didn't care. He'd do what the man asked: then he'd be free of him and he'd finally be himself. He'd be Harry, he'd go to America and he would just forget about what he had done but a few minutes before. He was not going to prison for having killed Igor now, would he?

The man should have been stronger than him. He had been weaker and thus a natural casualty in the fight. What did the man think: that he'd fling 'Verdimillious' at him? Harry fought to live and survive, not to drink tea and eat biscuits the next day with the enemy behind the bars. The blood snakes seemed to be coloring themselves more and more lightly as he took steps towards his destination, and gradually a sort of reddish hue covered both him and the corridor made of ice.

You think yourself right isn't it, you bloody murderer?

"I'm not listening."

Powerful and destined uh: the prophecy rings nicely doesn't it? You're the center of attention for once aren't you, the prophesized one! You're certainly going to become a frigging hero right? You'll like the lights of the cameras I'm sure.

"It's not true. I don't."

Really? You want to be average then? Just like the Fidelius wanted you to? You're afraid of opening the can of worms aren't you? Afraid of seeing that in the end you're just an arrogant brat rather than a real wizard.

"What can of worms? There's nothing..." He whispered back, as he could hear low murmuring coming from in front of him. The corridor was nearing its end and opening up into a more illuminated area with little to no doubt. Something caught his attention to his side, and as he turned his gaze against the reddish glittering snake and the ice reflection of himself...he choked on his own breath.

Harry was looking at Harry, but it wasn't a normal Harry to begin with. This one was angrier, fiercer in holding the wand. A small feral smile

that seemed beastly was held on a face that had two red bright eyes, his teeth looked prolonged and canine-like, while his hair was disheveled and upwards. It wasn't dirty blond any longer, having returned to its dark natural colors.

Poor little Harry, lost beneath the sea, where is his mommy, and where is he? We should all sing a song, tell him to be strong...we should all grab his hands, and kill him where he stands. Afraid of what he sees, afraid of what he is, but after all he's me, isn't he?

"Stop it. Stop singing." He muttered. "Stop this." He growled as he turned his head towards the light at the end of the hallway. Few steps, few hesitant steps, and with them he was out. A large altar stood in a circular room that held but three entrances and lines carved on the stone floor to display a triangle from one entrance to another. The symbol of the Deathly Hallows was clearly manifesting in the room, and as his cloak hissed and twirled around him, he knew that something felt wrong.

Was it resonating maybe? The murmuring was in truth a chant, done by the professors of the school. They stood clad in bright and cheerful robes, as if they were going to a party and not to slice the throat of some student for a sacrifice. No, not some student...a small crowd.

Many were of black skin, dressed in rags as if they had been taken from the African soil. They were probably the muggles whose blood would enhance the ritual: nobody actually counted heads in the desert, and if many disappeared or were reported dead by something there weren't actually charges pressed. Some came from Mexico, and a few were actually European too. He frowned at the sight of the shackles. It was like watching the slave trade being in effect: only it was a mass sacrifice.

No, it was a Zhertvy ritual. On the other side were the wizards to be sacrificed probably. He didn't recognize many of them, but they were all chained and bleeding from a straight wound on their chests; men and women alike with boys and girls...seven of them, for seventy seven muggles...because seven was a magical number and three sevens in a ritual was even more powerful.

There was power in there, all but waiting for him to grasp. He could become powerful. With enough pure and so easily attainable luck he

could do anything. Yet the chanting professors were only six. Igor was probably meant to enter the circle and chant together with them, while the Zhertvy on the ritualistic altar had some sort of curse that would kill them all at the right time. Not if he could avoid it.

He could interrupt the spell, but as he walked he stilled in surprise. The Gubernators of all classes were present just like the Praefectus and the so called Rex that he had never seen before. They were all watching from a side the magic happening. The older ones looked at it with barely kept smirks, while the younger ones held looks of shock but also of surprise and yearning. They were thinking themselves lucky not to be in the number of sacrifices if he guessed correctly. He gritted his teeth in frustration. He had to get Hermione out from there, didn't he? But what about the others?

Did he care to begin with? It was as he walked around looking for Hermione that she found six students' bodies chained in a corner of the room. A wooden pole stood there for the seventh one, the unlucky sod he had probably charred to a crisp during his battle with Igor. His stomach lurched at the remembrance of the battle, no...of the carnage, but he had to hold his tongue. He was still invisible after all.

If you are then how did you see your reflection in the ice, Harry?

He snapped his eyes shut, thinking hard about the voice in his head going away. The voice wasn't real and he wasn't mad. This was just Salazar trying to befuddle him. The power was there but he didn't want it. He...

"But I want you to promise me this: no matter what you will learn or do...please don't let its power get to your head."

"From great power, comes great responsibility." Someone said this, or am I wrong?

"Why tell me now?" He mumbled, before mentally cursing himself. A few of the 'extra' sacrifices were now looking in his direction, their eyes wide open in fright and dirt rags that once were the Durmstrang uniforms shaking to their strained and meager looking bodies. Just like cattle left to the butcher.

There were only six professors though. He could do it if he took them all out.

"If you seek to unleash Ragnarok then please, do interrupt a ritual in the middle of it." Salazar hissed at his ear, making his presence once more known.

"If you have any idea, then tell me." He hissed back.

"Move close to the girl. We'll hide her."

But then, what about the others? There wasn't only Hermione in there, and the cloak could cover the girl and himself...but no-one else afterwards. It would pretty much condemn the others to death as the ritual would end with them dead by the time of tomorrow...but then again why should he bother with the others?

And here we are again. You're not hero material you see. A hero would have fought head on! Take your wand out and fling spells! Call forth something like the powers of Cthulhu and destroy all that oppose you! You're a hero aren't you? You can do no wrong! The dead are the enemies and the allies are on your side for justice! Rinse and repeat and maybe, just maybe, you'll accept it.

That wasn't true. He would have liked to save the others, but how? How could he hide more than seventy persons beneath a meager cloak?

That's the point. You can't. Welcome to real life kid, grab a ticket to get conned by it. Now grab the damn girl and forget about them! They're worthless maggots! Muggle filth who wouldn't give you the time of the day, some of them seem to have just barely left the trees and others are just ignorant fools. Who cares for them!? No-one!

But...But every life was precious, wasn't it?

Are you truly citing Gellert of all people!? Then answer me! What defines a 'life' and what doesn't? Smash a spider and yet everything's fine isn't it? It's a life you murdered! So why care!? Why should you care for muggles, mudbloods, half-bloods or whatever else? You alone choose who is important for yourself. Egoism! You are an egoist! Make. Your. Choice.

A bell chimed midnight. The thirty-first of October began with eleven muggles and one half-blood student of Durmstrang suddenly convulsing as their shackles began to spin wildly, blood gushing out from each of their wrists. The blood sprayed on the altar's marble surface as Harry felt the pull once more. The pull would help him, wouldn't it? If he just left it all to the pull, then he'd be safe. The pull would do everything that he wanted her to do...right?

No. He was wrong. It wouldn't. He fought it as his right hand lifted the wand of Salazar, as a smoky figure emanated itself from within his very own body as the border between the living and the dead began to depart. The bell chimed the struck of midnight again, and the circle began to glow softly as his cloak billowed and lurched around. The symbol of the Deathly Hallows on Harry's cloak glowed brightly, as the liquid argent of the cloak simply returned to be a normal looking band of clothing.

"The Philosopher's stone...now." He blinked as his eyes widened in sheer shock and surprise. Looming in front of him was the ghostly pale and smoke covered figure of Salazar Slytherin, its right hand brought forward with the palm open...in wait.

He could not stop his hand from moving, as his fingers delicately grabbed the philosopher's stone from within his pocket. The pull could do nothing even though it seemed such a wrong thing to do, because magic more powerful was at work apparently than he could fight off. He handed it over to the ghostly figure of Salazar, who smiled with a smile that wasn't meant to be on the ghost's face. It was feral, angry, wraith-like.

It was a smile not of a man but of a monster.

The philosopher stone cracked and screamed as souls, hundreds of them contained in such a tiny piece, emerged from within yelling atrocities and obscenities. They screamed in tongues left out of the world and through words too long forgotten. They yelled in Latin, Greek, Sanskrit and many more. They tore at themselves as they circled the room before landing within the body of Salazar who had yet to say a single word. The man just looked in front of him, with his own dark eyes the man looked at him...and then the wand that had been in Harry's hand, the wand that had chosen him first...flew into the grip of the Slytherin.

"Gaboon Ebony...with Thestral hair core." Salazar smiled as he fondly held his wand. "I made this wand for myself...yet the Thestral hair is also a prime component of your cloak, you know that Harry? And condensed blood of a Thestral, if properly crystallized, can break the border between life and death..."

"Wh..."

"What I'm trying to say, Harry..." Salazar took a step backwards as he turned around to look at the six still chanting professors, none having realized something was going wrongly in the ritual. "Is..." The man's wand flicked as the few remaining souls fell beneath the surface of the altar, a small circle of bright light suddenly expanding. "That I am Salazar Slytherin, greatest of the Hogwarts four."

The man's skin suddenly sprouted clothes that covered his otherwise naked body, and as the man's small trimmed beard was brought out from within them, the dark eyes of Salazar looked around the hall with a bit of mirth.

"I wonder...should I finish what I started with you?" He asked carefully, "But then again...what can you do, Harry?"

"I...you promised!" He croaked back, hesitantly looking towards Hermione and trying to smile at the girl, who was apparently scared senseless and mostly dead rather than alive...

"And I keep my promises." Salazar replied with a small smile, "I saw your mind Harry. You wanted normality, did you not? You wanted to be average. You truly don't want the mantle of hero..." The man chuckled grimly. "Then you should rejoice! For I will take it away from you!"

The circle of light now covered the entire circled area of the Deathly Hallows circle symbol, covering the altar with the sacrifices and being also at the feet of Harry himself.

"Look around, Harry! The ritual is reaching its apex! Answer me this, boy...what is your surname? Who are you, Harry James Potter or Harry James Dursley? Are you Heinrich Grindelwald or Harry Slytherin!? WHO. ARE. YOU!?"

Screams echoed in the room as from beyond the circle of light figures began to rise. Slowly at first, wraith-like in appearance they stretched their limbs and clanked their cutlasses. Pirates and sailors rose from the very circle, one after the other taking hesitant and wobbling steps forward, to stand behind Salazar himself.

"Salazar ye old rascal! What took you so long?" A gruff and gritty voice exclaimed, as the ghost of Blackbeard himself slowly descended. "I waited for centuries! Was just about to move on when the scamp came!"

"Blackbeard." Salazar nodded back to the ghostly pirate. "Prepare the ships. The Tide of Darkness shall sail once more."

"You promised!" Harry hissed back in shock. "You..."

"I said I would not act against the muggle world, or have you already forgotten the contract I made you sign?" Salazar smiled, "I am not interfering...and the Zhertvy ritual? It's stopped. Don't you see?" He gestured around them, revealing the dreadful silence that was now encompassing everyone.

Harry blinked as he saw the looks of pure terror coming from the muggles, the witches and the wizards who were still awake. Many had dropped down in fright or fatigue, and many more had been unconscious before Salazar had even spoken...but now he could hear it: the silence that usually preceded the chaos.

"I just used it to bring back to life some of my followers..." Salazar continued with a wistful expression. "People like Blackbeard," the ghost nodded, "Henry Morgan." A zombie grinned, flashing a rotten smile filled with worms. "Bartholomew Roberts," A skinny looked rotten corpse laughed heartily. "And many more..."

"But that's...impossible! You were..."

"Killed? Maybe." Salazar nodded, "But not until much later. No, no matter the backstabbing, the arrows and the magic...I was not killed until much, much later." He slowly smiled. "I saw the city of Ys close its doors though, and I saw it sink deep beneath the sea."

"But Gellert spoke of..." Harry's words died in his mouth as his eyes widened. A sharp feeling of pain passed through his body, as the

ring and the locket of Slytherin departed from him and flew to their place on Salazar's own body.

"I take back what is mine for now, Harry." Salazar spoke, "I will reach Ys and reclaim the souls I lost there, and more will rise to the Tide," the man whispered as he took a step forward, "Now Harry, I said nothing about my men feeding upon the life of the muggles, did I?"

And with a dreadful and wicked smile, Salazar brought his wand upwards...

And the Tide of Darkness laughed heartily as it began to run while screaming, their objective clearly to eat and feast upon the life of those within the halls.

The drinkers of life shall rise to the call of the master of Snakes.

Gellert had been wrong.

The prophecy wasn't about only him.

Grindelwald...why had he...

"And I was nearly forgetting myself!" The master of Snakes suddenly said, "I can't have a prophesized child go somewhere after all...I truly hate prophecies..." The man chuckled. "Harry, my dear Harry...as the head of the house of Slytherin..." Silence stretched in the room for a few seconds, interrupted only by the screams of the muggles being feasted upon by the zombie and ghostly horde. Yet to Harry their screams were silent, for he had eyes and ears only for what the man, Salazar Slytherin, had to say. He was the blight on the world that he had freed...and he suddenly realized that he was no hero at all: just a child.

"I disown you from the noble house of Slytherin."

And something, deep within Harry's own soul...left.

The incredible sense of fatigue, the pain in his muscles, the stench of vomit on his clothes, the fright and fear of the situation, the sheer hopelessness of being saved, the trembling of his hands and arms and the whimpering sounds lodged deeply in his throat...

They all came back.

"Now do me a favor, Harry." Salazar had gotten close to him, so close he was actually whispering in his ear with his wand pointed at his chest. "Die."

And then, Harry Dursley fell on the ground, his chest riddled with holes as he began to bleed.

He barely felt someone holding tightly against his chest and slowly carrying him away. He barely felt the light of the room give way to the dark and cold harshness of the ice corridor, and he barely even remembered being lifted and helped to move by a pair of hands. It was as darkness was just about to claim him, that he saw who was carrying him.

Hagrid.

And following him limping was Elmo, carrying Hermione.

There probably was a story behind that, but as Harry lost consciousness from the blood loss, he decided it could wait.

Author's notes

It appears Hagrid arrived late.

Elmo appears to be still alive.

Hermione appears to be fine.

Everything appears to have been wrong and screwed up horribly.

Enjoyed writing the battle scene actually...

And the title of the book appears clear now, doesn't it? Tide of Darkness= Zombie Pirates!

...and ghost pirates.

And the sunken city is apparently Ys.

This is another important thing to take care of= Everyone can be wrong, even Gellert. He completely mistook the prophecy for having only one intended recipient while in truth it had more than one.

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 18

His eyes opened to a strange looking ceiling covered with frescos. It was golden hued and large polished windows delivered the sun rays within the room. Harry could feel the warm sheet covering him and their satin-like feel. He wearily blinked as he took in his surroundings. It looked like a pretty room for someone to live in. With the water basin on the bed-desk and the chair next to his bed he acknowledged that someone had been nursing him. So he was someplace warm, safe and possibly rich as hell.

Did the Potters end up stealing him? Bleary and bleak images came back to his mind, of Hagrid carrying him outside...how had the half-giant managed that? And the Invisibility cloak...he didn't have it on himself, did he lose it? He felt weak, incredibly sore and his eyes were closing down once more. He tried to force his body to move, to get out from under the covers, but it was a lost battle. He couldn't move. The feeling of warmth was intoxicating, leaving him sleepy headed as he succumbed to it.

The eyes opened again, to a new morning and to a wet feeling on his forehead. He realized a hand was hovering over him as a figure was standing to his side. It was blurry, but it did appear to be a blond haired woman. He narrowed his eyes, but could not make out who it was. The figure rose from its place and left him there, saying something in French that he did not understand. He tried to stay awake, but once more he just dropped asleep.

Finally he woke up completely on the hopefully same day, as the sun was setting over the horizon. This time he grasped with his hands on the side of the bed and hurled his own body out of it. The impact with the cold floor woke him up completely, and as he wobbled on his feet he began to hesitantly step away from the bed and towards the windows. Luscious greens and neat hedgerows met his gaze, followed by plants cut in animal shape and cobblestone paths made of white polished rocks. He wasn't at Durmstrang, of that he was sure.

He wasn't even at Hogwarts, or at the Potter mansion. There were students in the courtyard walking around, all clad in light blue colors. The small white clouds lingered around lazily in the sky. Resembling

cotton balls, they moved to the East beyond the horizon. His fingers gently touched the window's surface, before quietly and silently removing them from the glass panel. He took a step backwards and turned around.

Are you going to ignore me?

The reflection of him on the window asked. He clenched his fists quietly as he breathed in the cool air of the room. It smelled of disinfectant and potions, mixed with perfume. His chest hurt as he breathed, and his right hand gingerly touched the bandages that were covering it. The memories of the wound came rushing back to him. The memory of Salazar, of those moments of dread, of the man's words...all those thoughts assailed him one after the other.

You'd rather go back to sleep, right?

He winced as his thoughts were made manifest in the voice that spoke to him from behind his neck. Had he really done all that he remembered?

Yes. You did.

The fire, the flames, the heat, the memories of the battle against Igor and of his cruel actions...the dead body in the cell that he had burned without knowing, who was the student? Why had he burned it? It had been a mistake hadn't it? He hadn't wanted to do it. He had just been in the way and it wasn't his fault if...

Oh? He was in the way? Strange way to put it...how can a boy in a cell be in the way?

"I didn't know." He snapped back at the window's reflection of him.

And that excuses you? The tone was amused, as was the reflection of him that stood with his arms crossed, his eyes red and his smile feral. The boy reflected that was him, and at the same time wasn't, looked through him and at him, before slowly moving its head to the side, in wait for an answer.

"Y...No." Harry choked as he spoke, "But...I didn't want to."

Does that bring the dead back?

He closed his eyes, a chant already forming at the tip of his lips.

You're not real. Really? Is this the best you can use as an excuse? I'm not real? I'm a figment of your psyche? I'm an illusion? My...you know my name, don't you? Come on. Tell me. Who am I? It's important you see. Names are really important. I'm the pull that can do no wrong right?

No. He wasn't. He was schizophrenic and he knew it, so he wasn't mad. He just had to ignore the voice.

You birthed me Harry. You birthed me since your first kill. You birthed me from your torn soul and kept me fed. You know who I am Harry. Come on Harry, say it. Say my name.

No. He wished desperately for it to be wrong, he felt it, he knew it, and yet he couldn't come to terms with the truth of the matter.

Ah. You know my name, so speak it then. Say it. I know that you know Harry: don't lie to yourself. The figure chuckled, Harry could hear it chuckle as the hair on the back of his neck rose.

"King." He whispered.

It's a pleasure to finally meet you, Harry. King replied. See? It wasn't difficult.

"You're...You're a voice in my head. You aren't real." Harry whimpered taking a step back.

Oh? Really? What then makes someone real? Are you not recognizing me as real? Yet here I am, ain't I? Come on, I'll be the Gollum to your Smeagle, I'll be the Hyde to your Jekyll. You longed for something more than average didn't you? Or maybe you wished for average? What is it that you wish for actually, Harry?

"I..."

That's the problem isn't it? You don't know. For being an extremely egoistical child you don't know what you truly want. Fame, power, peace, living the hidden life...you just don't know. How sad. I know what I want though, don't you? I want to rule this world. We have the

power. We have the chance. We could do it. Show some ambition would you?

"I'm..."

Don't deny it! King yelled at him. You want power! You want strength! You no longer wish to be fate's bitch do you!? You want to carve your place in the world through blood and power! You saw the fire and you loved it! You want to see your enemy burn and suffer! You want to sit upon a throne of gold and rule the insects beneath you with an iron fist! You can do no wrong! Isn't it what you want!? ADMIT IT!

"NO!" He choked back, opening his eyes as the reflection showed himself as him again. The room seemed to have gone through a tornado however. The bed's sheets were torn and hanging everywhere, as the wooden chair appeared to have been splintered while the stone floor was cracked in various spots. The frescos on the ceiling seemed burnt, as if something had flung acid at their delicate figures and melted the skin out of the depicted men and women.

"No." He whispered, as the door of the room opened with a large sound. He jumped backwards, his hand going to his wand...that wasn't there. Had he lost it? His eyes widened from the implication, as the blond haired woman that had walked in had brought both of her hands upwards, in a sort of gesticulated mean to 'calm' him down.

He looked at the woman wearily, before taking a step backwards when she took one forward. He looked around quickly, looking for weapons of any sort. This wasn't a game, but holding a wooden leg of a chair could do wonders probably. At least, if he considered it a stake and the enemy was a vampire.

The woman seemed to hesitate for a second, before taking out her own wand. He winced as spells hit him and halted his movements.

Captured again? My...you really need my help don't you?

No. He didn't. They wouldn't have healed him if they were enemies now, would they? He didn't know the answer to that question, but as

the woman gently levitated him back to bed and then left, he knew that he'd get an answer soon enough.

The answer came when the door opened once more, admitting a white haired man dressed with a cardigan and a pair of dark leather trousers and a brown haired girl dressed in a sort of blue uniform. Hermione looked positively anxious as she walked closer to his bed, and as she neared it she literally began to cry as she lunged to hug him.

"Thank you. Thank you." She whispered as she tightened her hold. "I...Thank you."

He reddened from the effort of breathing through the bone crushing hug of the girl as his eyes cast a suspicious glance over to the white haired man.

"Oh Harry, I'm sorry." The girl eeped as she stood backwards embarrassedly. "This is Mr. Flamel Harry! Nicholas Flamel! He's the creator of the philosopher's stone you know? He's the one who saved us..."

He remembered the souls; Souls screaming for release and crying for their torment. He recalled the souls flying around in circles and pleading for a freedom that was not theirs. He winced as the pressure against his head suddenly disappeared: the man's try to enter his head removed with an earth shattering effort.

"I...I don't..." He murmured breathing raggedly, "Where's my wand?" He finally asked.

"Miss Granger? Could you leave us alone for a moment?" Nicholas asked kindly to the girl, who looked with a light frown to both men before slowly nodding and walking out of the room. The door closed, and in that moment Harry had already jumped on the other side of the bed, rolling for cover as the man had taken out a wand from his sleeve.

"Nicholas Flamel?" Harry asked with his eyes narrowed. "What is the philosopher's stone made of?"

The old man sighed, before throwing the wand in his hand towards him. He let the wand hit the mattress of the bed, before flinging the

cover towards him and grabbing it at the same time as he ducked to the side, behind the smashed remains of the desk.

"There is nothing to fear, Harry." The man spoke quietly, "I'm not going to harm you."

"Ha! Fat chance!" He hissed back, the wand in his hand feeling strangely cool from his touch. He looked at it with a sort of awry expression that soon morphed into shock. The wand was melting as he held it, turning into a sort of sticky paste that was making it hard to even open it up again.

"I am however going to hold you still," Nicholas deadpanned. "I do need to talk to you Harry...about what you've done and what you're going to do." The alchemist's wand flicked to the side, and Harry's cover soon levitated out of the way. The boy's eyes widened as his lips tightened in a mixture of anxiousness and nervousness. Once more he was powerless.

"This is a long story, Harry...you might want to sit down." And with those words, Harry found himself being magically lifted and dropped on the bed again, the bed sheets ensnaring him...as Nicholas Flamel began to talk.

Lillian Potter

She had lost the map, again. The Marauder's map had slipped off her pocket and had ended up only Merlin knew where in the castle. She hadn't found it by retracing her steps that day, and no amount of looking around had worked. On Halloween however, something had changed. Sophie, Harry's phoenix, had come to inhabit the chamber of secrets once more. The red feathered bird appeared to have aged considerably in the time Lillian hadn't seen her, and some of her feathers were already a light grey shade.

She didn't know what to think, as any time she mentioned Harry's name the bird began to softly whimper. Begging the bird to bring him back didn't work, and so in the end she felt like a giant lead weight had settled down on her stomach. Basileus had given her a small mirror that sort of worked like the mirror of Erised. As long as she looked into it, it would read in her mind for the thing she desired the most. The moment she'd manage to only see her reflection would be the moment her Occlumency shields actually worked.

It was the middle of November, during lunch, when a ministry official entered the halls of Hogwarts followed by what looked like a veritable army of aurors. More than two dozen wizards in leather jacket and combat boots strolled in with hard, glaring faces. Dumbledore stood up from his table and looked with a surprised face at the incoming men, but she standing to the side of the Gryffindor table could see the grins forming on the lips of the Slytherin.

"Headmaster Dumbledore." The official began starting to read off a parchment, "You are hereby ordered to evacuate the school grounds of all students."

"Surely...you jest?" Albus' question was barely choked out, "What is going on Crouch? Why should the school be closed?"

"Someone claiming himself Salazar Slytherin has waged war and conquered Durmstrang," to those words, Lillian gasped as her hands clenched tightly. Harry was in Durmstrang. No, even worse...Harry had told her something was going on in there and now this? Someone claiming himself Salazar? No, Harry wouldn't. Her brother wouldn't. She knew her brother would not...but Sophie...The phoenix...But he had promised she'd be told everything! What had he done? What...What had her brother done!?

"The Navy of their school is sailing towards England as we speak. They have already claimed victims along the North Atlantic Ocean, and the Royal Navy is passing through the Saint George's Channel as we speak to hold them off! We've got the statute of secrecy nearly reduced in tatters!"

"Their...Navy?" Albus queried, worriedly.

"Yes Dumbledore! They've got a fleet! A fleet governed by Inferis and ghosts of all things! They've sunk down the Atlantic patrol fleet already and they're engaging over the channel! Whoever the Salazar look-alike is, he's punching through the Royal Navy like they're made of cardboard! And he's fighting on Caravels and Viking ships Dumbledore! So get your damn ass out of that chair and evacuate this school!" The official literally screamed, before taking a deep breath to calm down.

"I'm sorry. I lost my temper." The man muttered, looking downwards. "We've already lost a few good aurors on it, Dumbledore. Whatever Salazar wants, he's made it clear it's in Hogwarts. With the speed of travel he's going at...he'll be here by the end of the November."

"I see," Dumbledore muttered, "Why wasn't I informed sooner, Crouch? Why come here now?"

"Because we have received disturbing news that the criminal Harry Potter was last seen at Durmstrang, utilizing the philosopher's stone to bring back to life the army of Inferi." Crouch replied, "And because of that we will hereby conduct inquiries on the entire school population before letting them leave."

In the silence that shocked to the core the entire room, not a single noise, a single breathing sound, a single clattering of forks or knives was heard. Silence, oppressive and ghastly, smothered the thoughts of everyone who heard said words, but mostly, it was Lillian who was now trembling.

She couldn't believe those words now, could she? Yet Sophie had...Sophie was proof enough. A phoenix couldn't lie. They were naturally creatures of good, and if she had left Harry, then Harry was no longer good. He was no longer the same Harry she had seen that night, frightened and scared. Why hadn't she called her mother!? She could have avoided all of this. She could have saved him! What Savior of the Wizardry world indeed! She couldn't even save her own brother!

The figure in the cloak, the figure in the Deathly Hallows...it had been that of a man, right? The chamber of secrets and the figure...the ghost of Salazar? Harry had been possessed...and it had all been her fault. She could have called for her parents long before her brother had woken up, but she hadn't. She had thought herself so grand and powerful and able to help. What utter sack of bull she was!

She could hear her mother softly sobbing once more. Her mother never usually cried, but whenever they spoke of Harry she did. She was feeling guilty, and now she'd be crying again...and this time it was Lillian who felt even worse. She could have avoided all this. She just needed to talk didn't she?

The students were sent to pack, and as she hastily made her way to her parents, the noisy voice of Malfoy came to her ears.

"The King is returning to his home! Now you will all face his wrath for having betrayed him once he arrives!"

She stilled. She whipped out her wand. She turned to face the blond haired boy that was smirking in the hallway and pointing his finger towards the Hufflepuffs and Gryffindors who angrily looked back at him. A soft blanket enveloped her mind, as an order softly told her to do it, to hit Malfoy with a powerful curse. The next instant a sickly green light parted from her wand, a spell she had no knowledge of hitting straight ahead Draco and turning his face completely pale.

Within seconds, the boy began to cough blood as it gushed out from his pores. The Slytherin screamed as blood came out of his ears and eyes. He screamed as he fell on the ground, his bones too brittle to hold his weight. They were on him in a second of course. The professors, the Headmaster, the Aurors...but the Slytherins were no longer just watching.

Curses began to fly, and as she returned to her senses she gasped. Orange and red were being fired from both sides, as a veritable fight had erupted within the dining hall.

"Revenge! Fight for the King of Hogwarts!" Ginny Malfoy actually yelled on one side, her wand out and casting a set of terrible Bat-Bogey hexes on the nearest Gryffindors.

"Death to the Death Eaters!" Ron yelled back, who was terrifically downed by four different curses that sent him bleeding against a wall...as the older years of Slytherin took down the impromptu banner holder of Gryffindor first. The Ravenclaws worked with efficiency, the older years forming fire lines after having transfigured their table into an entrenched sort of wooden fortress. Basileus stood atop a small wooden counter, flinging hexes and curses of the foulest nature while smiling wickedly. The Owl and Newt corps made point near the hallways, moving the younger Ravenclaws out as they picked off anyone and anything that tried to move, no matter its year.

The Aurors actually ended up with three men down, before the scuffle finally began to wind down. At the end of it, the Slytherin and

Ravenclaws stood with a few Hufflepuffs still standing. Of the few still on their feet, Hannah was currently holding a knocked out Susan with blood coming out from her forehead. An auror was moving closer to the bleeding girl, when a stray shot literally tore off the man's arm.

The auror fell on the ground screaming and clutching his limb, and as her eyes trailed off to whom could have shot the curse...she realized it had been her very own wand. The wands rose at the same moment against her from nearly all sides, and as she panicked trying to explain...bolts of orange hit her directly and she slumped on the ground, darkness claiming her.

Gellert Grindelwald

Salazar reborn? What did the boy do now? Did he begin his attack earlier? Gellert could easily see the thoughts that Harry had gone through actually. An army of Inferi and Ghosts could easily be called Life Drinkers, if they feasted upon the Philosopher's stone. Thus with one line done, and Azkaban under the grasp...the sons of a bloody past would be...the sons of the Death Eaters.

He was coming to Hogwarts to claim the last fortress of darkness. How fitting: it was just like proclaiming Albus as a Dark Lord. Still, calling himself Salazar reborn was probably a trick for the 'Master of Snakes' requirement. How strange did the prophecy have to reach and delve to bring forth its requirements?

Controlling the Girl-Who-Lived through Imperio was extremely easy. The girl had no defenses to speak of, and as soon as he had given her orders she had obeyed them without fault. They'd probably discharge her, but with this small action...Dumbledore's reign over Hogwarts was finished. The savior of the wizard world going dark was just the final piece of the puzzle. And all this happened because of house differences...How pathetic. Durmstrang would never have fallen to bits from the inside because of this. He was already seeing the end of Hogwarts with every student carried out, with every Healer coming through the hall to check the wounds of those who still walked.

He saw the looks of smugness from the faces of the winners, and the looks of defeat and awkwardness from those that lost. He saw it all and he grinned slightly. Nothing like a victory unified a front of its

righteousness. As long as a battle was won, no slaughter was unjustified. It was the grandeur of violence after all: the dead enemy is wrong no matter what.

The few moments it took for the Healers to get the dining hall once more under control, and within the hallways of the school the surviving students of the other houses had already been hit and knocked out. The Slytherin and Ravenclaw supremacy was undisputed within mere minutes, and he, Gellert, mentally laughed out loud. Everything was perfect. His grin betrayed him however, but it didn't matter, even as Dumbledore's eyes travelled to him, even as he winked back at him and made an 'okay' sign...even as his face paled and the old wizard finally, finally after all these years realized who he was because of that sign...

Even then, he couldn't remove the smug laughter from his face.

Even then, he couldn't help but aim his wand straight ahead, at him.

Even then...when the Avada Kedavra hit the wizened old man...he did not stop laughing.

The best revenge...was the one served dead cold after all.

Salazar Slytherin

"Blackbeard, deliver the board side volley to our lovely gnats of Frenchmen." He curtly hissed, as the ghost merely grinned before barking the orders. The roar of the cannons was accompanied with the crackling of the magic that flew through the wood of the ship, the steel of the cannons, the powder of the explosive and finally the ball itself. Steel, Protego shields, even top of the notch military ships were powerless and cut through like butter in front of the frigate brought back from the depth of the sea.

The USS Proteus fired soon afterwards, followed by the USS Insurgent and the USS Saratoga. Within mere seconds one of the once proud ships of the French navy was now a riddled with holes tin can starting to sink down to the depths of the sea. The HMS Juno soon fired a volley from the left of his frigate, keeping at bay noisy incoming vessels. Motorboats they called them. Were the muggles truly trying to board the ships? He was tempted to let them aboard, if

only to see their faces when Blackbeard or any other ghost or Inferi began to tear their flesh apart with their teeth.

He chuckled to himself as the Queen's Anne Revenge sailed freely towards the Channel that would lead his way between Scotland and England and towards Hogwarts. Nobody could stop him, not without using magic most foul and hidden by the ages. He commanded with his wand the most ancient of spells, and once he reclaimed what was his, then nothing would stop him again. He had sworn and promised he would not interfere with muggles...unless they interfered first.

When a cruise ship had 'decisively' struck the side of his frigate...well, the contract was pretty clear he could retaliate freely. Now with the muggle navy firing at him, the contract was practically void and null. He narrowed his eyes and tightened his lips, as someone had apparently decided to fly towards him. He flicked his wand towards the intruder, who deftly avoided the barrage of spells as it descended downwards, landing on the deck of the ship and whipping out his own wand.

A dark haired man stood on the deck now, a snake coiled around his neck and a soul that held a fractured malice like no other could. Salazar stilled and raised a hand, stopping the crew's men from tearing apart the intruder. It took mere instants for him to recognize the man in question.

"Lord Voldemort, is it?" He rhetorically asked with a slightly amused tone, as he slowly descended from his spot at the helm towards the main deck, where his 'heir' stood with a slightly angry expression.

"Who are you, to claim the name of my ancestor?" The man asked warily. His eyes moved around the deck eyeing the Inferi and the wraiths, all that looked famished and hungry. Positively ravenous he would have described them, but still...

"And who are you to think you can fool the might of Salazar with such a shoddy work?" He hissed back, his wand doing nothing more than a slight circle motion. In the next instant, 'Voldemort' was compacted into a writhing pile of limbs and blood and flesh, as the creatures on the deck launched themselves to feast upon its body.

The snake hissed its way away from the mass of torn limbs and flesh and slowly assumed the form of Tom Riddle, the real one. He smiled. At the very least his heir displayed a small amount of cunningness. Not much, but he could work with it. Still, the torn soul was a bit of a problem. How many had he made of himself?

"I beg your forgiveness, my ancestor." The voice was smooth as the man bowed to him. He distorted his face into a sneer of disgust.

"Rise! None of my blood shall ever kneel to man." He growled. Tom Riddle obeyed, and soon he was standing in front of the man. "You are but a shard. Where are the rest of you?" He asked.

"I do not know." The man replied narrowing his own gaze. "I know I was woken up from my slumber by a betrayer, as I inhabited the ring of the Gaunt family, proof of my heritage." As soon as he showed him the ring, Salazar smiled. His wicked grin was probably thought as a sign of happiness from the other man who smirked too. The ignorant fool...

The stone of resurrection stood there, neatly arranged atop the ring. Its power called to him and to him alone...He'd have to dispose of this shard probably. He did need the stone after all. Safely on his shoulders was, after all, the cloak of invisibility. Soon he'd be back to Hogwarts to reclaim what he had left there. After all these centuries, power would once more be at his fingertips. Nothing and nobody would ever be able to stop him, once his chamber would unload all of its secrets to him.

"My heir, Hogwarts nears." He commented offhandedly. "You will lead the assault through the chamber of secrets."

Tom Riddle flinched.

"The chamber? My ancestor, there is no way to enter through the wards..."

"Fool." Salazar hissed back. "Do you doubt my word? There are hidden doors. One in Beauxbatons and one in Durmstrang and both lead to Hogwarts and vice-versa. I know: I built them under the nose of the fools that came after."

"I understand," Tom replied soothingly. Did he think flattery would get him anything? Salazar refrained from rolling his eyes, as another volley from the enemy navy tried to make its way against them. A wall of ghost-like evanescence soon parried the rounds, letting them harmlessly explode and fall in the water with resounding crashes.

"I do not think you do." Salazar replied with a small smirk, "But you will learn." He nodded, "Or you will die trying."

Heinrich Grindelwald

"Now Harry," Nicholas began slowly, "This story takes place a long time ago. It begins with a young alchemist meeting a man, a powerful man that was incredibly charismatic." The famous alchemist spoke slowly, as his wand stood still on his leg. Nicholas had sat on the now repaired chair near the bed where Harry had been immobilized.

"The young man began to follow the powerful man, and together they uncovered secrets of alchemy never known before to man. The power of magic that ran through blood and the power of magic itself that came from the soul. With it, unspeakable and unimaginable things could be done. Magic itself could bend the rules of nature and the laws of the universe. Through magic, one could stop age itself and send back the clock of time. The time-turners, for example, are a product...my product, to prove it. The powers that we held were unmistakably ours...and godlike."

The man grimly frowned, before slowly shaking his head.

"I should have known better than to trust the word of Salazar Slytherin." He whispered. "The man knew the secrets of the Philosopher's stone even before I discovered it, yet he did not want to be the one brought to the spotlight. No, he wanted me. He wanted me to discover it, to deliver it to the world...to tell the world how it was made and refined..." The alchemist took a deep breath, "But luckily, I refused. The secret of how the stone is made, Harry, is something I cannot and will not reveal."

There was no reply from him, since he was actually being gagged as well as immobilized. He should start packing a knife or a small dagger in his sleeves or cloak. He decided it there and then: he'd

arm himself with more than a mere wand next time he had free time...if he remembered this without getting Obliviated at the end.

"Prisoners on their death rows were used to produce the stone, the original stone..." Nicholas spoke quietly, "One by one those who knew were killed by Salazar. He seemed to understand me at the time, he told me he felt the same about the secret of life we had discovered: that mankind wasn't ready for immortality, not at the price of others' souls...he lied." The alchemist laughed bitterly, "He fucking lied."

"He told me nobody else of the founders were alive. He had survived by sleeping through the ages as a vampire and coming back to life through magic. I believed him! Stupid idiot that I was I believed him to be able to do the impossible! He had used the Philosopher's stone. He had kept on using it, killing people and placing them inside the mother stone. Inside the stone of the beginning...the stone that absorbs the souls, refines them through a constant motion and twirling of magic and stirs it to produce its desired effects..." The alchemist's voice lowered itself gradually as Harry found it more difficult than ever to keep his ears distracted from the story. It was starting to make sense, but it still didn't explain...

"I stopped making the stone in the eighteenth century." Flamel whispered, "I married, never had children, lived happily...and then someone came knocking at my door. Telling me how the few remaining scraps of stone could be stolen by Voldemort." He chuckled grimly, "I shouldn't have trusted Dumbledore! In the end he stole what remained, brought it to Hogwarts...and you came along."

Harry's eyes widened as Nicholas smiled.

"You came to me and asked for a pocket watch. You asked for one pocket watch that would keep you safe from mind intrusions, you asked me for something that was highly illegal, but offered back to me the philosopher's stone...and promised to keep the way it was created a secret. You did that. Yes, I know you don't remember it, but that is what you did..." The man smiled awkwardly.

"I accepted. I admit I added a tracking spell on it to try and understand why you did it, but when you brought back the philosopher's stone, I accepted it. I stopped caring...until the watch

broke and I realized that somehow, in some way, your hands had ended up chipping away a piece of the stone: a piece that you, against all sane principles...delivered to Salazar Slytherin." The old man sighed.

"You might be asking yourself: what need would he have of a small bit if he could have its origin?" The man chuckled. "Because I got him good the last time I saw him! I turned him into a ghost, a wraith, or a specter whatever you wish to call it! I didn't think he would manage to become a Dementor of all things...I didn't think he'd...he'd bypass the laws of Hogwarts itself." There was a deep breath now, Harry narrowed his eyes. What was the man aiming at?

"The cornerstone of Hogwarts...it attracts ghosts." Flamel began, "It took me years to understand it...but Salazar's laboratory, the place where he first created the philosopher's stone...was at Hogwarts." Dreadfully, Harry's eyes widened.

What you seek is the clock tower.

The clock-tower. The pendulum, the mechanisms always moving, always ticking, stirring and the clock that never stops. No. It wasn't possible. He couldn't be...The pendulum that stirred. The magic that was heavy in the castle. The images, the memories, the promises...

"The...Philosopher's stone...the mother of them all...is at Hogwarts." Nicholas Flamel spoke quietly, removing the gag from Harry's mouth. "And if Salazar wields it...his powers would know no equal in the world."

"H-How?" Harry croaked out, "No...A better question," he whispered, "Is why you're telling me this?"

"Because you have a choice now, Harry." Nicholas spoke carefully. "A choice you must decide upon. A choice that cannot be forced."

"What choice?" The boy murmured. "WHAT CHOICE!?" He yelled back at the man.

"Acknowledged by the founders' blood, the changer will rise to defeat the darkness that creeps to the house of the dragon, heir of he who worshipped by all walks with the animals, he shall face his enemies atop the spires of time and space itself. Unbind by

darkness, prophecy or light his choice shall mark the difference between redemption and revenge."

"A prophecy?" Harry whispered incredulously. "Another one?"

"Yes." Nicholas nodded awkwardly. "Many prophecies were made along the centuries, and many were left unheard of...but few, very few, are starting to come active recently...even one can change the world, and you...you've been the center not of one, but of two."

"Only?" Harry snorted. "So I don't have a choice now, do I?" He muttered as he took out the ring of Wyllt, "I never had."

"Oh no, you do!" Nicholas exclaimed, smiling slightly, "You are the embodiment of change, Harry...whereas you realize it now or not it doesn't matter. Your choice is yours alone." The man stood up slowly, "There is, within this school, a passage to Hogwarts. I have not found it, but I know it exists. It leads one to the chamber of secrets."

"I'm no longer Salazar's heir: he disowned me." Harry replied hotly.

"Maybe...but Merlin was his son after all," Flamel replied with a slight wink while his gaze went to the ring in question. "And he was known to have walked with animals in his youth."

"You gave me the ring." Harry accused.

"Yes. You have a truly fascinating Cockatrice avian." Nicholas replied.

"A Cockatrice? Machiavelli is a hybrid poultry that walks!"

"Oh?" The alchemist raised an eyebrow, "Well if you say so, then it has to be true!"

With a hearty chuckle, the man brought both of his hands to his stomach. Halfway through the motion though he carefully he folded them over his chest, albeit the motion seemingly looked as if he had wanted to bring them down to a slightly larger than he displayed stomach.

"So...I have a choice?" Harry whispered once more.

"Yes." Nicholas nodded, "And no-one can take it away from you now."

Harry said nothing. He just...He just looked at the ring, lost in thoughts.

What would happen if he didn't choose right? And what if he instead did? Was he really going to become the savior of the world then? Was this a mantle he could wear?

King would.

The question was...was he King? Was he ready to suffer and face his own actions and their consequences?

Was he truly ready for it?

Then again...he had a choice.

So why was it so difficult to choose?

Author's notes

Let us acknowledge the fact that Nicholas might be lying before proceeding.

Let us acknowledge the fact that I did mention some doors of the Chamber of Secrets not being found around. Let us acknowledge the small bit of prophecy that Dumbledore didn't want to realize. Let us acknowledge a lot of things, ranging from the ghosts mysterious disappearance to the philosopher's stone true power. Let us acknowledge...the fact that Gellert had to press the acceleration on his plan because whom he believes to be Harry is doing the same. (You see? Biased thinking guys! Biased acting!)

And let's get ready to roll.

The ships mentioned are all sunk/disappeared ships. Actually the fact that Durmstrang needs seventy-seven muggles a time is incredibly easy: just look at all the disappearing ships never found again. The Queen's Anne Revenge is a sunken ship once used by Blackbeard. (Fitting it would be here now, right?)

Heart-filled thanks to my reviewers, (Vikraal, I hope you got better from your flu!) even those who quit midway because something wasn't liked (thing of fanfiction is that you can quit midway without wondering 'darn it, I paid for the book!') any review is appreciated and no, the Harry Potter and the Realms of Dungeons and Dragons wasn't the oneshot I had planned. The one I had planned is getting refined because it's lacking in style. (I'm not really good at writing sadness I'm afraid. Sure, I can twist and torture poor Harry...but make the reader sad? That's more difficult)

See ya on the next update!

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 19

You can't force people to change. People have to change by their own accord, act upon their very own impulses and choose their road by themselves. You cannot grab a man and fling him across a street, telling him to keep walking on the other side of the sidewalk. If he doesn't like that side of the sidewalk, he'll come back to the one you're on. His eyes travelled through the surface of the silver ring, taking in each of its distinctive signs, scratches, etchings and symbols. He looked at its polished surface and at the small difficult to clean pieces that still held a bit of grime on it.

It was such a small thing. Yet to him it felt as heavy as the world. He had a choice. For once, in his life, he had a choice. This was what scared him senseless. It was easy to give the fault to the prophecy. It was easy to renounce and to commiserate because he had no free choice. Now he had. Now he had a choice. He could choose not to take the ring, and life would go on. He didn't know what would happen to him, but he had the choice to go through it and see it for himself.

He could take the ring, and immediately in his mind images of clashing at Hogwarts came through. His wand twisting and pulling out spells of titanic magnitude as he fought head to head with the greatest wizards the world had ever birthed. He flinched at the sight of the destruction he could or would cause, and he frowned at the sight of what he would...or could become.

He would stop being Harry, and he'd become King. The problem was that this was a choice. He was being offered the chance, not forced to take it. He could refuse.

He was looking at the teeth of the lion practically...and he had to choose whether to place his head within and hope for the best or not. It was kind of ironic...now that he had free choice; he was starting to wish he hadn't.

There was no pull to take the ring as there was no pull not to. He just had to make a choice; one tiny, little, choice. Accept the ring and what it entailed or refuse it. So easy...he just had to move his index within the ring. He felt like Bilbo or Frodo looking at the one ring of

Sauron. He felt so weak and insignificant while staring down as the wheels of fate spun and clicked in wait for his choice.

Finally, closing his eyes, he plunged his finger through the ring.

I knew you would make the right choice, Harry.

He breathed in as soon as he did that, releasing out all the air he had kept in his lungs as his mind had spun around the thoughts and the consequences of his choice. He looked at Nicholas Flamel, who was smiling at him with a small kind expression on his face. The man was probably happy he had chosen to become a hero instead of just being him.

"So you've made your choice, Harry." Nicholas commented, slowly standing up from his chair. "Don't move too much now. You still do need your rest." He added carefully. "We'll see each other later on after all: for now, rest."

With a hesitant nod, he watched the old alchemist walk out of the room. He breathed slowly, as his gaze travelled not to his surroundings, but to the windows. To his reflection standing in the same bed as him, but that was smirking with a smirk that did not belong on his face. The red eyes looked at him with something akin to mirth, and as they did Harry felt himself cold and shivering.

Well Harry...you should rest.

He winced as the creeping cold that had serrated around his heart brought him into a painful slumber of agony. He felt as if his entire body was being covered with needles and tiny daggers. His own eyes burned as his skin flushed with sweat. He gasped clutching his chest as he could hear a soft blanket of something landing squarely on him, above the bed sheets. He barely opened his eyes to register just what strange and lithe figure had ended up atop of him, but he was too tired to even think straight and succumbed to sleep once more.

He woke up to a careful rhythmic breathing on the side of his face. He opened his eyes to stare into the deep dark ones of a slightly older looking Sophie, who seemed sad as she faced him. There was no accusation in her stare. She just looked at him with a sort of resigned look of plead, as if to make him promise he would never do

something like he had done in Durmstrang again. The memories of the fire and the smell of burning flesh hit him even though there actually wasn't a burning corpse near him.

As his eyes travelled to the source of the rhythmic breath, he widened his eyes in surprise. Lillian was there. Against all odds, Sophie had apparently taken Lillian out of Hogwarts and next to him. He turned to gaze at the phoenix who softly crooned, flapping its wings slowly before nibbling at his hair locks. Sort of cleaning them like some birds usually did with their young.

He slowly stood up from the bed, moving his bed sheets to cover the girl who appeared to still be wearing her Hogwarts robes. She seemed to be sleeping with a ragged breath, but she didn't look wounded or bleeding, so he just left her there and finally walked out of the room that had been his 'prison' for only Merlin knew how many days.

As soon as he was out of the room, he met face to face with his reflection on a nearby mirror on the wall. The hallway had a richly embroidered carpet, with wonderful and tasteful paintings hanging from the walls. It reeked of wealth and gold, and somehow Harry knew with a sneering thought that Beauxbatons' reputation as the school of the 'prim and proper' was probably merited.

It was with bated breath that he began to walk through the hallway, keeping the room on his left as he hoped to find a bathroom or a stairway down. There were no guards or security personnel around, and he actually shook his head at the thought. This was a school, not a prison complex. He half expected wards to warn people when he left: if they did, then the guards were a bit slow on the uptake. If they weren't, then he had to ask who had thought it smart to leave him in his room without someone watching over him.

He was harshly reminded he was without a wand, and that was probably the reason he had been left with no-one to watch over him. He was without a wand and without the invisibility cloak, and while the ring of Wyllt seemed nice and fit his finger, it wasn't a weapon. At least, not that he knew about it. Maybe it was, if only he knew how to make it one.

Are you lost, little lamb? No mister Wolf, I'm going to my grandmother's house...

"Red riding hood now?" Harry snorted as he peered behind a corner, finding the corridor surprisingly empty. Maybe this was the last floor and as such only reserved to the staff?

And where does your grandmother live, little lamb? Deep in the forest, Mister Wolf.

"You're as helpful as a nail up my foot." He mumbled as he quietly took few hesitant steps forward, before hearing a noise of footsteps coming in his direction from further away. He deftly opened the door closest to him and entered, before looking around with surprise at the fact that he was in a sort of dining room. It was smaller however, and silverware was sparkling atop a set of white clothed tables. So they were right the guys at Durmstrang: Beauxbatons did have a course on proper displaying of forks and knives. The problem was that the noises were coming closer, so he took a deep breath and swallowed, before hiding beneath the furthest away table in the corner. Thankfully the white tablecloth covered him completely from sight.

The door of the room opened as a classroom trickled in. They spoke in French and he winced when in the end everyone took a spot near the tables, even the one as far as he was. He was standing there sweating from his hands as the lesson went on when the tablecloth moved a bit as a fork fell on the ground near him. He mentally cursed as he saw the hand of the student absentmindedly look for it through the cloth without bringing up the cloth. It was a female hand, polished and manicured too. He winced as he saw the other hand move to grab the cloth and probably lift it, and with a quick thinking decision he moved the fork straight in the hand of the student in question.

Thankfully the lesson was going on, and because of that the student didn't appear to want to waste any more time and returned both his hands above the table. He silently sighed in relief, before straining his ears trying to understand what was going on.

"Mademoiselle Delacour," he understood the professor had walked closer to the table beneath which he had stood, "restez après la leçon." He heard a muffled reply in French, but gritted his teeth and waited. They'd eventually leave, wouldn't they?

And since Red riding hood trusted the Big Bad Wolf, the grandmother was eaten.

"Fuck off." He whispered harshly.

"Avez-vous dit quelque chose?" The professor was apparently keen with his ears, since he had just then returned near the table. Why couldn't he end up listening to the lesson of a deaf guy? He had to have damn Bugs Bunny eared person to suffer through. He clenched his jaw tightly as he felt powerless. He hated the feeling of not being able to do anything. He'd probably punch the guy if he ever managed to see him in the eyes.

"Non professeur." The female voice replied quietly. Afterwards, the man left again.

And then because Red Riding Hood was a stupid, lurid, wrench of a whorish idiot the big bad wolf ate her too. Then the hunter came by, and killed the big bad wolf. He probably also killed the grandmother and red riding hood, since the hunter is a psycho bastard to boot, but who are we to say any different?

"That's not how the story went." He mouthed without letting even a word leave his throat.

No, this is how the story is going. You're a whore. Do you like being whored out to others? First Dumbledore, then Bellatrix, then Gellert, then Salazar, then Nicholas...you're a whore! Whoring must be in your blood then!

"That's not true." He clenched his fists as he closed his eyes shut. Why was this happening? He was going to be a hero!

No. You're going to be a whore. Being a hero is different. Heroes charge blindly through the fire. Whores go where they are needed.

"They know what they're doing!" He muffled out biting his right hand until he felt the smell of blood and he winced from the pain. He looked at the semi-circle of his teeth on his hand and whitened. He had a bad triangle-shaped burn on the back of his hand: probably it had appeared when he had burned Igor to death as a backslash of the spell. He hadn't even felt his skin burn, albeit his hand had been slightly reddish afterwards.

Little Red Riding Hood went to the park. The Wolf got to her and ripped her apart. The girl cried and screamed and screeched, but nobody helped her for she was such a bitch!

"What are you singing?" He thought, closing his eyes as he breathed in slowly.

Your future. The future you envision but dare not speak of. The future you dread will come to pass. You alone abandoned by all. No-one to help you or turn to out there right? But I'm here. You know that I will always be here for you Harry. I'm your brother in the dark. I'm your good half, the one that can do things! The one that can solve problems! The one that you have to accept! I am you and you are me, and together we sing beneath the tree! I will kill if you refuse, so all you have to do is choose. Choices are the best there is, always cut-clear that's what it is. Yes or no you have to say, but be damned if you say nay.

"I've got a damn musical in my head." He whispered in fright as he shook his head fiercely. If he did it fast enough, would it take the voice out of his head?

I am shivering with delight, you are trembling with fright. I am waiting patiently, you are scared senselessly. I have time to waste and spare, you have nothing but a scare. I hear your plight brother I do, so make your choice silly you!

Thankfully the noise of the students stepping out brought him to forget about his thoughts and the King, and to concentrate on the now and there. He could see the nervous shuffling of light blue shoes from the student at the table he was hiding beneath, and the polished ones of the professor.

"Avez-vous choisi?" The professor asked.

"Je ne peux pas." The female student replied, "Vous etes le professeur."

"Je peux vous faciliter la vie" The man pointed out with a slightly strained voice, as the female student instead retorted something else. Soon the man was yelling at her and within minutes, he felt the man lunge across the table. The tablecloth began to spin and in an

effort to grab it and hold it still, he found himself jumping upwards. The wooden surface crashed hard against his head, and as he instinctively brought his hand above to wince, he found himself covered in the table cloth.

Taking the chance he jumped straight against the side where the man was, and hearing the satisfying sound of him falling down screaming, he punched the face of the guy through the thick white cloth until he stopped yelling. Catching his breath, Harry wobbled back on his feet.

Saving damsels in distress, how cliché for the heroic prophesized one!

"Shut the fuck up King." Harry muttered, wincing as he looked at his bleeding knuckles. There probably had to have been some silverware still on the table when he had acted like that. He just hoped he hadn't killed another man. He heard a slight noise behind him and as he turned around, he came face to face with a silvery-blond haired girl with sparkling dark blue eyes...who was pointing a wand at him.

Of course his luck wasn't going to give him any quarters.

"Qui etes-vous?" She asked in French, narrowing her eyes.

"Ehm...I am English." He replied awkwardly, taking small steps backwards and inching closer to another table. "Friend." He hastily added bringing both of his hands upwards.

"Madame Maxime knows you are here?" She asked with a hesitant tone in strongly accented English. He didn't know if this Madame Maxime knew he was there, but he did know he'd admit to being Voldemort's right hand if it got him out of there. He hastily nodded to the girl, who still kept a narrowed gaze on him and cutely frowned. Cutely?

And the whore whores itself again, for a nice smile works better than thousands of gold coins.

He gritted his teeth as his right hand went to the table cloth behind him.

"Do not try and run." The girl replied, "I will stop you if you do." She then lowered herself on one knee to remove the table cloth from the face of the professor he had knocked out. The man was bleeding from his broken nose, as his neck held scratch wounds because of the forks and knives within the table that he had flung at him when he had risen upwards.

Oh the snob! Let me at her! Let me out Harry, I'll get you out of the room and I'll get your wand back! You don't have to worry about a thing!

No, he could do this. In the moment that the girl spent looking at the wounds, Harry jumped behind the table and dashed for the exit, lifting a table with his hands and holding it by its legs in order to block an incoming orange missile. He literally tore the door off its hinges as he dashed outside, soon followed by the blond haired girl who was screaming something in French. She was probably swearing if he had to guess.

He turned sharply around a corridor, avoiding a flurry of orange and light blue lights that tore through a few artistically painted drawings. The feeling of the air against his face as he ran was strangely exhilarating, even though a normal person would probably do something else, he couldn't help but laugh as he ran. He had avoided death and bloodshed. He had dodged curses and unforgivables...and this? This was just fun to him. He grabbed a small desk in the hallway and flung it backwards, hearing the tell-tale sound of its destruction by the girl who seemed keen on pursuing him.

He reached the flight of stairs within mere minutes and jumped, landing on the railing as he once more propelled himself in the air. If only he knew how to fly, then this would have been an easy thing to do. He landed on another soft carpet, this one a bright red colour as he kept on sprinting. He needed a wand. He was running through a corridor when from one of the nearby hallways a group of students passed through. Increasing his pace, he literally cut their road as he kept on running forward.

He realized he was still holding on to a tablecloth there and then, apparently when he had first flung the table to protect him while opening the door he had held on to the scrap of cloth. He probably looked like one of those pac-man ghosts running away from the big

yellow ball eating guy. He chuckled with mirth as he reached another flight of stairs, but this time he was forced to stop himself half-way. Considering Nicholas Flamel was coming upwards, he found his running could stop there and then.

Maybe he did stop abruptly, because as he removed his cloth and moved it to his side, the girl barrelled straight into it as if she was a bull being blinded by the red drape. She literally ended up flying down and would have crashed against the ground had Nicholas not been quick enough to flick his wand at her falling form and slow down her fall to a gentle landing.

"Harry? Care to explain?" Nicholas asked perplexed.

"My wand," He replied calmly, "Then we can talk."

The girl within the blanket seemed to be fighting to get it off, and he couldn't help but chuckle one last time at the scene as Nicholas launched a wand to him. He first left it to fall on the ground, before slowly getting down on one knee to catch it. As he did, a boy who had tried to catch him from behind fell over, harshly landing on the stairs and rolling downwards.

Nicholas raised an eyebrow.

"What did you do precisely?" The old alchemist asked as he slowly walked up to where he was. Harry shrugged as he turned around, facing with perplexity at the classroom he had cut the road off before, and who was now looking at him in murmurs. At least, the female part was. The male one was apparently trying to murder him with their bare hands considering they were moving closer.

"Why are they not using their wands?" He asked curiously as he saw a few of them suddenly blanch at the sight of Nicholas and hastily move back with the rest of their peers.

"There is a strict set of regulations about using one's own wand in the school." Nicholas retorted calmly. Harry raised an eyebrow. So the girl had actually gone against the school's regulations to try and apprehend him? How amusing. He shook his head as he firmly grasped his wand. The wand flared and sparked as it sang to its user's hand.

He smiled as he felt his wand thrum and actually rejoice at being back in his hand. He sighed in relief and breathed deeply before turning his gaze to where the girl had managed to extricate herself from the table cloth. He flicked his wand towards the table cloth, and as it flung itself towards him, he grabbed it.

"I'll be in my room, there's a guest there you should meet Nicholas." He offhandedly remarked as he began to walk forward, draping the white cloth on his back without actually thinking about it like a king's mantle. The students dispersed as he passed, murmuring in French as he reached the end of the corridor and began to climb the stairs up and back in his room.

He chuckled to himself as he closed the door of his room behind him. The next moment his wand hand already formed the Protego shield before he could even think.

If you didn't have me you'd be already knocked out. Pathetic, lowering your guard like that.

"Why?" He asked, raising an eyebrow at the sight of his sister holding her wand and pointing it at him with a trembling face.

"You...Harry?" She croaked hesitantly. "Is it really you?" She whimpered quietly.

"Yes." He replied perplexed, "Is something the problem?"

"I knew they were wrong!" She exclaimed, dropping her wand hand down as she tried to stand up from the bed, but miserably howling in pain and falling down on the floor. He was next to her in a minute, carefully holding her back up and placing her to sit in the bed. "I knew they were wrong." She sobbed. "I knew they had to be lying. You'd never do it."

"Do what Lillian?" He asked perplexed.

"You...You were at Durmstrang yes?" She hesitated. Her hands instinctively clenched the sheets, "Someone calling himself Salazar...He's moving Durmstrang's fleet against England and towards Hogwarts." She whispered, "You aren't him right?"

"No." Harry replied quietly, "I'm not him."

We did free him though.

"When...When they said all that, the Slytherin at Hogwarts attacked the other houses together with the Ravenclaws. I...I tried to make them stop, there were aurors and Dumbledore but...But I cast a spell I shouldn't have and they attacked me and I don't know why or how but they were holding me off in the ministry when...when Sophie came to save me." She quietly looked at him with doe-like eyes, "You sent her to me?"

"No." He replied with a shrug, "She went by herself." He didn't feel bad for having told the truth, albeit the flinching and the recoiling of Lillian told him all that he needed to know about what the girl had actually thought. "If she helped you out then it's good. You'll be a better owner to her than I will ever be." He retorted carefully. "I'm not going to be walking on daisies from now on..." He awkwardly smiled, "I've got an army to bring up."

He looked towards the phoenix, which seemed to be crooning softly while looking at him with tears.

"Now Sophie, we had fun and you know it." He muttered, "But violence cannot be fought with words." He shook his head at the insistent crowing of the phoenix. "No. I'm not choosing the easy way out." He chuckled, "I'm taking the difficult one." He tightened his grip over his wand. "I've got a plan in mind." He admitted after the persistent flapping and screeching of Sophie, "I'm not going suicidal."

"Brother?"

"I...I suppose I can tell you," Harry admitted as he tiredly sat down on the chair near the bed. "There's something you have to know, Lillian." He brought his gaze up to meet that of his sister, before continuing. "I'll have to fight Salazar at Hogwarts. To do that, I'll have to bend to my will the Inferi that reside in Nurmengard and march together with the Dementors of Azkaban to where he stands. I'll stop him from getting his hands on the philosopher's stone but..."

There was a loud ruckus just outside his room, and after a few seconds Hermione Granger literally flung open the door as she

entered. She was holding the most angry-looking face Harry had even seen, and it was actually scary to behold.

"Harry! What the hell!? You wake up and on your first stroll you knock out a professor, nearly kill a student and toy with the Fleur of Beauxbatons!? Just what does your brain tell..." And there Hermione stopped her rant, because she just then realized who else was in the room.

"Hermione?" Lillian whispered in surprise.

"Lillian?" The girl replied dumbfounded. "How? No, wait, how did you get here?" Hermione looked at the phoenix on the bed and gasped. "Is that Fawkes? Is Dumbledore around? Harry you must..."

"She escaped too." Harry replied calmly. "Sophie brought her out of the ministry."

"So...Sophie? Harry, since when do you have a phoenix?" She asked.

"She's not actually mine." He replied, "She just follows me around most of the time."

Sophie chirped as she hopped closer to him, nuzzling his cheek with her head. She did have a soft plumage though.

"But I'm not the best owner she can have." He whispered, shaking his head slowly, "So it's better if she stays with Lillian from now on."

"Harry...Phoenixes are unnaturally loyal animals," Hermione replied. "If she chose you, she will stick around you until death and even beyond...She's not going to leave because you ask her to."

"I'd hug you but I'm feeling like hell." Lillian murmured, "Did Harry save you from Azkaban? So it was really you," turning to look at him the girl was speaking with awe, "You really did enter Azkaban to save her."

"I had help." He admitted. "Gellert Grindelwald was..."

"Grindelwald?" Lillian's face turned slightly green. "Wasn't Voldemort enough!? You had to side with Grindelwald too!?"

"Lillian!" The rebuke came from Hermione, and not from Harry who looked dumbfounded at the bookworm Gryffindor defending him, "Harry didn't side with Grindelwald! It was a necessary evil to get himself out of Hogwarts! He's not around now luckily, and I've spoken with Madame Maxime about studying here and she said..."

"Studying here?" Lillian made a 'bleargh' sound. "What's your problem Hermione!? Hogwarts is..."

"Ruled by a sycophant and a dictator." Hermione snapped back, "And he's a sick and twisted individual who..."

"Dumbledore has yet to..."

"Oh now you can't be serious Lillian! He's..."

"Sophie, can I ask you to teleport me to Nurmengard please?" Before the two girls could reply with a dreadful and shocked scream of 'no' to Harry, the boy had already disappeared from the room.

King

"I was growing tired of all that bickering." Harry muttered as he stood with Sophie on his shoulder, the strong walls of Nurmengard standing in front of him. The wards pushed at him as he took a hesitant step towards the gates, but gave way when they recognized his magic. Sophie gently nibbled at his hair, as he took silent steps through the massive oak gates.

He looked at the settled dust in the compound, his eyes slowly adjusting to the darkness within the halls he trudged upon that seemed so silent and eerily quiet it made him uncomfortable. He reached for the door that would lead him to the cellars, to the underground, to where he knew the army of Inferi awaited him.

He took a deep breath as he did that, as his hand touched the handle of the door and pushed it down. He quietly opened the door and stepped on the first step down. He stepped and the noise resounded all around him, soon echoed by the terrific stench of rotten flesh and the moans of the Inferi themselves. He could hear the sound of the water droplets hitting the cold floor, and with every step he took he went closer and closer to his destination.

Step by step he hardened his face, step by step his shoulders stopped trembling and squared themselves.

Step by step he walked into the heart of darkness that was the fortress of Nurmengard, once prison of many and then prison of one. The wards recognized him...but the Inferi, if their screams were of any indication, did not. It took him an instant to take out his wand as the first blood filled scream echoed in the cavern.

It took him a second to make his decision known as Sophie flared to life and flew in the air, beginning to circle around him, her feathers on fire. It took him a moment to smile and laugh clearly as the Inferi began to surround him.

We. He flicked his wand as a jet of pure red flames unleashed from its tip. The moisture in the cavern evaporated in an instant, as the scorching heat encompassed the room.

"Are." He swiped his arm vertically, and the fire as a whip answered his movements opening a path through the screaming undeads.

"The." The creatures roared as they all charged at him, their hands like wicked claws. Their teeth were fangs filled with dread as they opened like razor-traps.

"King." The jet of fire exploded outwards, as Harry charged ahead, screaming as he made his way through the horde of Inferi who instead thought it better to try and stop him. Fire rocked forward as he opened for himself a path of brimstone and sulphur. Step after step he moved forward. Forward and never back, to where he felt the pull calling to him, singing to him, warning him. He knew where to go because it was his destiny to know.

Find the cornerstone, bleed upon it and bow them to thy name. That is the path to power, that is the path of the King. No second thoughts. No second ideas or opinions. Your will is their command. Your actions their laws.

"Ignis!" He roared as he blasted away an Inferi. A pool of murky water stood now in front of him, and as the fires burned around him even on the stone floor, he narrowed his eyes. Sophie lifted him up with unparalleled ease, as if he himself weighted nothing more than

a feather. She flew him through the water, deftly avoiding the hands that shot from within its depths to try and catch him.

The cornerstone was there. Just a few more meters. A few more steps on the cold stone floor, guarded by a ...

"Fluffy?" Harry whispered in disbelief, as the giant Cerberus dog howled in pain and charged at him. Its three heads all circled by wicked looking collars, as if...

Gellert had lied to him.

Gellert had lied and Fluffy hadn't gone to Durmstrang. Hagrid hadn't been to Durmstrang, he hadn't thought about why he was with Flamel but...

Fluffy was there, guarding the cornerstone.

The Cerberus was there...and Harry hesitated.

He was flung into the waters by a vicious claw of the three headed dog who whined in pitiful moans as the blood collars forced him to obey. He fell with a sordid squelch sound, before the Inferi hands grasped at him and their teeth sunk into his flesh.

Feasting upon him as he began to drown.

His nightmare.

His nightmare made manifest.

His...

Help. Help me.

No-one was there as his hands dropped below the surface together with him. No help came. Sophie tried to fly beneath the water but could not. His blood mixed with the water, rising while he went down. The pain dulled by the cold icy depth his eyes began to close.

A small stream of blood twirled lazily, as it made its way upwards, to where his ring rested in his hand. An Inferi bit his hand, its teeth marks now forming a perfect circle with his own.

A line mark where the wand had burned him once.

A triangle mark where the fire's backslash had burned his hand.

A circle mark where he had bit and been bitten.

And a small flicker of light in the depth of his vision came to him.

But it was not the phoenix.

No...

It came from his hand.

Author's notes

Cliffhanger.

Hate me, love me, but we're starting the second 'part' that all my stories have. In the first part we get our hero repeatedly beaten down and massacred by the events. In the second part, we start seeing him climb back up from the hellhole pit he ended up in until he rises above the others.

Well, madame and monsieur, I hope you enjoy this chapter, for we'll be going on a journey from this point onwards!

PS: I always seem to forget: for those who don't know, there is a nifty site called flagfic, if you place the url of any story on the upper left side and select a format, you can download it in that format on your pc and then read it also on a tablet so to say.

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 20

Something landed snugly in the palm of his hand as the cold and dead hands of the Inferi pushed him down even more. He clenched the thing with all the strength he could muster, and as he did thus a bright light blinded his vision for a moment. The pressure of the Inferi disappeared as he felt himself being pulled upwards and out of the water by the strength of a Leviosa spell. He gently floated above the water pond once more, breathing raggedly as he sputtered out water from his mouth and nose as he looked at what now stood in his left hand.

A sword with a simple looking handle, inscribed with the words Caledfwlch upon its hilt and along its metallic blade, was there in his hand. It softly illuminated the cavern around him, and as he quietly readjusted his sight to the dimly lit cave, he looked at Fluffy. The Cerberus was still there, howling and barking in a mixture of apprehension and yet also anger. The three headed dog was probably guarding the cornerstone since Gellert had taken him, and with the blood collars literally driving the poor beast mad with pain it no longer held any trace of sanity within him.

Putting it down would probably be an act of kindness. He clenched tightly on the sword, as Sophie flew around him once more trilling softly. The wounds and the bite marks he had suffered slowly came to a stop as the bird perched on his shoulder to heal him with her tears. Fluffy barked at him with spittle and blood flying everywhere, and yet Harry stopped for a second there, in flight.

"Sophie?" He whispered, "Can...can you heal a beheaded body?"

He looked at the phoenix with hope. Sure, it would be difficult to cut down one head of the Cerberus and then have Sophie cry on it to heal the wound, but it was possible. It would be extremely difficult to avoid getting wounded, but if the phoenix cried hard enough...The bird shook its head sadly.

"You're...You're telling me I have to kill him?" He asked quietly. The bird, slowly but definitively, nodded.

Harry breathed in, before closing his eyes for a moment. He was going to plunge the sword that had appeared out of nowhere into the body of Fluffy, the Cerberus dog that had been one of his friends without fault. He was going to kill him because he was in the way, because he was unredeemable and because he had no other choice.

That is a lie.

"You have a better solution?"

No. You have a choice. Prophecy or not you do have a choice. You can leave. He'll keep on staying down here in the dark, rotting away from the sun and forced to guard a chunk of rock until he finally dies.

"So I should put him out of his misery?" He whispered as he sadly noticed the lack of nutrition in the giant dog's body, the ugly looking fur and the numerous wounds he had suffered on the neck, many of which were painfully infected and probably hurting the beast like nothing else could.

You have a choice. Choose.

"It's not a choice." He replied harshly as he narrowed his eyes, "When you have to do the right thing instead of the easy thing."

Harry brought the sword backwards as with his right hand he directed himself forwards, to fly and land back on the ground with Sophie darting from his shoulder to peck at the three headed dog. Tightly holding onto his sword with his left hand, his right hand pointed forward.

"Trudo!" Ethereal lances of force pushed forward, their tips flaming as they pounced against the broad chest of the Cerberus. Cuts and bruises appeared on the blood matted fur of the dog, who growled as one of its head was frustratingly trying to grab Sophie. The rest of its body charged forward to him, and Harry swished his wand forward too.

"Forgive me." He mumbled, "Cuspis Terrae!" The ground shook and the rocks split apart, as a palisade of rock lances halted the charge of the dog midway, wounding its paws and forcing him to howl out an agonizing cry of pain. The ground slowly rose together with each step Harry took forward, the sword now wielded with both his hands.

"I'm sorry." He whispered, tears streaking down his face. "I'm sorry." He murmured, as step after step he moved closer to the dog's heads. Sophie had blinded one of the heads, who now trashed about with no sense of direction. The second soon followed as Harry finally reached the very end of the impromptu stone stairway.

He breathed deeply once more...and then he jumped forward, sword in hand.

The noise of metal hitting against skin, tearing apart muscles, bones and passing through a body as if it was nothing more than butter made him mentally retch in disgust. The sticky feeling of being covered in blood made him feel green as his stomach lurched in search of relief. He looked at the blood collars laying broken and halved at the sides of the now dying beast, neatly cut where the three necks joined the body. As Fluffy wailed his last pitiful whines, Harry clenched the sword strongly and with few determined step brought the sword through the beast's stomach.

He lodged the sword straight into its heart.

There was one last whine as the sword perforated the beast's body, and then silence interrupted only by the droplets of water falling from the cave's ceiling into the pond ensued. Harry breathed slowly, as he quietly turned from the beast's corpse. Sophie flew down on his shoulder once more, her bloody beak doing nothing to hide her sad and teary eyes.

A path to power is always filled with blood and skulls.

"Shut up." He muttered as he began to walk forward, beyond what looked like a stone archway naturally carved into the cave. Through the archway stood a cobbled path that seemed to move in a sort of spiral like pattern with the walls around it slowly but surely closing in on it. It made him feel claustrophobic by the time he finally came out of the strangely easy 'maze' that held no roundabouts or detours or crossroads.

It was as he left the narrow road behind him, that his eyes stared into a multitude of grey and red coloured ones. His first thought was of a giant Acromantula. His second thought was of a giant spider. It

was only as he took in the entire mass of the thing that he realized what he was actually looking at: a giant Inferi.

An Inferi stitched up through various corpses, looking every bit like an abomination of nature, stood with its giant claws and metallic hooks in the giant stone chamber beneath Nurmengard. Behind it, on a pedestal, stood a white marble stone covered in blood runes. The cornerstone was there apparently...guarded by the father of all Inferi.

He could feel the ear splitting screams of the tortured souls within the stitched corpse, all mad and completely lacking intelligence. The sets of razor sharp teeth that he saw in the mouths of the creature were something akin the horrors of Nyarlathotep, the crawling chaos. It was a humanoid mass that of human had little to nothing. 'Burn it with fire' was strangely the only thing that came to his mind at the sight of such a monstrosity.

It was also the thing he did.

"Ignis!" He bellowed as fire sprouted from the tip of his wand.

It's weak! The voice within his head roared as the small flames barely grazed the giant hand of the Inferi that was coming down on them

"Scutum!" The ground itself rose as a shield, as Harry knelt down behind it as the claws of the Inferi passed above him, tearing through the stone wall as if it was nothing more than paper. Sophie was circling the giant beast, whose tiny eyes, tiny human eyes, were equally divided between him and the phoenix.

You need more! You need to concentrate! You want to destroy it! You want to will it gone!

"Why don't you try Mister Know-it-all." He scathingly snapped as he jumped to the right, deftly avoiding the fists of the creature coming down on where he had been but a second before. He rolled on the hard ground with a dull thud, the sword landing out of his hand and clattering against the ground.

He cursed loudly as he wobbled back on his feet and began to dash towards it, his left hand outstretched to grab it.

Why, I'll do just that. Accio.

The sword flew from the ground and straight into his hand, as its blade began to spark flames and lit up. The letters of Caledfwlch shined brightly, as the flames that surrounded the sword turned blue. Holding onto the sword he could feel the heat emanating from it, but more than the scorching wave something else had Harry stare in awe at the sword.

Caledfwlch, Caliburn, Excalibur. She who cuts steel. The sword of King Arthur, said to have been given back to the lady of the lake, the sword without its sheath, stolen by Morgana herself. You know this Harry. You know so why do you fight it? I know all that you know Harry, all that you subconsciously know and refuse to admit.

"I'm holding Excalibur and fighting a giant undead monster." Harry whispered. "What else? Will I face a balrog?"

The hulking Inferi began to take steps closer to him, probably deciding that if he could grab him then he would squish it beneath its body.

You know what Gandalf said while facing the Witch King?

"You can't be serious." He muttered as he looked at the giant feet of the Inferi lift into the air. He chuckled. He smiled. He laughed. He lifted up his flaming sword and pointed his wand.

Go back to the abyss!

"Fall into the nothingness..." Harry intoned harshly as he poised to strike. The Inferi feet began to fall down fast, faster than he would have ever believed such a massive creature could do. There was no space for doubt, no time for compromises or second thoughts. There was nothing but the sheer acknowledgement that this was what he had to do, what he needed to do and what he would do.

"...That awaits you and your master!" He roared as his wand burst forward with a veritable fist of rock and fire, molten earth itself burst from the ground in flaming lances of dread as they pierced through the thick undead skin and literally pushed him backwards. The hulking creature fell on its back, the rock lances having literally torn

apart its legs and sent him to wail and scream in an unearthly tongue as its giant hands clawed on the ground for some stability.

"I am Harry Dursley!" He screamed as he charged forward running on the cooling rock lances, jumping atop the stitched flesh of the monster with the sword flaming. He realized he was screaming halfway through the fallen body of the Inferi, and with renowned purpose he screamed his anger and his rage, the tip of his sword cutting through the flesh of the monster and burning it as it went by.

"I am the King of Hogwarts! The ruler of Azkaban! The wielder of Excalibur! I am your executioner!" And then Harry jumped, fire sprouting literally from around him as he drove the sword straight through the giant creature's head. The fire burned all around him, tearing through the skull, the brains and the wriggling dead flesh as it severed half of it from the body of the Inferi, while the rest began to burn as if spontaneously combusting.

See? This is what you can do if you really will it.

"Just shut up King." Harry muttered with his throat hoarse from the screaming. He wobbled forward, his body covered in grime, filth and blood. He spat out from his mouth the foul taste of the blood that had somehow entered his tongue and walked closer to the pedestal. He cleansed his left hand on the inner side of his leather jacket, and with a firm but decisive action he used Excalibur to cut his palm and bleed atop the stone.

Careful here: you have acceptance, not the right to wield the fortress. Gellert is still alive.

The blood had begun to wash over the cornerstone, starting to pool around its runes and symbols as it slowly dripped on the pedestal's surface and from to the ground. He gritted his teeth as he began to feel lightheaded.

"I seek my rightful throne." He intoned. He screamed in pain as what felt like a giant splinter had just lodged into his extended left arm, burning through him as it moved towards his shoulder.

"I seek my sceptre and my orb!" He whimpered out as he groaned in pain. His right hand holding his left shoulder as if pushing or pinching the flesh could lower the pain he felt.

"I seek...my inheritance!" He screamed lastly, as the splinter seemed to stop its march and slowly release itself from within his arm. He landed on the ground panting, as he looked at his left hand and barely repressed a grim and mad laughter.

The sword on fire had backlashed and given him a triangle shaped burn. The cut of the sword had given him a line on the palm of his hand...and whatever the dark curse that had passed through his arm had been...it had given him a circle shaped mark. His right and left hand both wore the same marks. Those of the Deathly Hallows themselves.

"Marked by the Hallows...please tell me there isn't a prophecy about this too." Harry groaned as he wobbled back on his feet, his hands coming to rest atop the white cornerstone.

I think being at the centre of one prophecy is bad, two is an accident, but...three? Three is a plot.

"Paranoid much?" He commented offhandedly as he lowered his shoulders and closed his eyes. His magic flew from the tip of his fingertips as his breath hitched in his throat. He felt the pulsing waves of the wards twirl and twist around him, the maddening screams of the souls of the Inferi bound to his will. He could feel it, clear and crisp and exhilarating. Power. Untarnished, unbound, free to be taken.

He shuddered as he clenched his hands upon the wisps and the tendrils of such force. The souls screamed. The Inferi bowed to his will as he clashed against the few wards that resisted. He rose atop them, squashing them down into the stone as his face deformed into a frown, while his nose slowly began to bleed. Carefully his hands moved away from the cornerstone, and as he turned around he looked with seemingly devoid of life eyes at the burning mass of the hulking Inferi.

He brought his wand hand forward, its palm open and its fingers upwards as if to grasp something that only he could see. That was the truth after all, he could see the wards. The sheer audacity of Nurmengard's wards was extremely dark and yet so easy to understand. Pain filled the wards with energy. The pain of the Inferi's souls bound to undead husks and rotten bodies charged the wards

that in turn kept them bound to his will. The burning hulk of an Inferi suddenly twitched: its giant mass folding upon itself like a grim and bloody origami of flesh and skin. Its bones broke and splintered as it reduced itself in size, until it morphed into a small black coloured pebble.

Harry brought down the ring of Wyllt on it, and the pebble attached itself as if it was its rightful place to be. He snickered at the gleaming black onyx that now stood set on the ring that once belonged to Merlin.

"Sophie." He called, turning to gaze at the phoenix which looked at him with sad eyes. "Once I'm done...I promise you I'll free them." Those were the right words, as the phoenix sang heartily as it flapped its wings, before landing once more on his shoulder. In a shower of sparks and flames, they both were gone from Nurmengard.

Gellert Grindelwald

"Reducto!" Penelope Clearwater roared, as a shocked auror was flung out of the room by the sheer intensity of the spell and reduced to smithereens.

"How are things proceeding here?" He asked looking at his team of Sturmtruppen. He grinned inwardly as the answer came positive. They were making progresses with the wards just outside the office of the Headmaster. That taken care of they would most certainly find the keys of Hogwarts within it, and pulling down the wards afterwards would be easy.

"Everything's fine Flock Leader." Davies exclaimed standing to attention. The boy had a pretty face, but also a quick tongue and mind...and was apparently a natural in bringing down wards around a location. "We're working, Fawcett and I, on a variation of the muggle lock-pick technique to bring down the middle wards." He began to explain, but he was cut off abruptly by a gesture of Gellert's hand.

"No need to explain. Get the wards down before another wave is sent through. I swear those tunnels will be the end of Hogwarts before long." He commented, his icy eyes looking at the ragtag group he had assembled. All Ravenclaws were of fifth year or above,

exceptions made for Fawcett who was actually a fourth year, but she was smart enough that she had wanted to sit her owls in advance.

He gritted his teeth in annoyance. The funny thing about Hogwarts was that the wards were specifically made to protect the students of the school from external threats. So students could kill each other easily, or students could kill aurors easily, but if an auror tried to attack a student...the wards would come on him with full strength and strike him down. The metallic suits of armour in the corridors had already begun marching around with their lances, striking down those who were deemed threats by the castle.

It was sheer chaos. The Slytherins had been grouped and ordered to get the unconscious prisoners down in their old common house and keep them inside. The castle was being literally besieged by the ministry forces that, however, were also busy with the external threat that was coming right up towards them. Last he had heard Salazar reborn was making its way through St. George Channel unstopped by the royal navy. Unless the Spanish or the Germans suddenly decided to become interventionist, there would be nothing to be done about his arrival at Hogwarts.

He had already spoken with the 'King's men' and Draco had assured him they'd fall in line with Harry as soon as he arrived. Their loyalty had already brought them to wear the Hogwarts robes instead of the usual coloured ones to differentiate the houses. Kevin Entwhistle arrived with news apparently, important ones to boot.

"Basileus!" The boy exclaimed, "On the second floor there are masked Death Eaters!"

Gellert blinked.

He blinked and stared owlishly at the panting and hard breathing boy.

"W...What?" He finally found himself asking. Death Eaters? Here? How? While he had little doubt on Voldemort's probable survival, considering only an idiot would try and face head-on a prophecy, he still had no idea why the man had come with his troops. For what it mattered, how had he known that he had killed Dumbledore to begin with?

It had been a masterfully prepared moment though. His wand had shot out the moment the old man had given his back to him, and once the green light had departed from his wand, he had disillusioned himself to be on the other side of the room. For all that the aurors knew, someone near the girl-who-lived, or maybe even she herself, had cast the killing curse on Dumbledore. Voldemort shouldn't have picked it up that fast, unless one of the escaped aurors actually had been one of his spies.

He frowned in distaste as this would change things drastically.

"Do you know where they're going?" He asked starting to formulate a plan.

"No. They appeared to be headed towards the dining hall, but we didn't actually stay and look at them. We just warned the others and left."

Gellert frowned. Technically, if they brought down the wards, then the Death Eaters would have free reign. So why weren't they coming up to the Headmaster's office for the keys? What was there that was more important than that?

He blinked as he suddenly began to curse in German. The others looked at him with a mixture of surprise and shock as he hastily made his way to the end of the corridor.

"Go back to your dormitory! All of you! Warn the Slytherin to stay alert!" And then he began to dash along the corridor.

There was only one action far more powerful than taking down a ward when conquering a magical castle: assuming control of the cornerstone. The cornerstone was more than just the first laid down brick in the building. It was the potential that the building itself had and, once it was completed, the realization of it. Like when one writes and completes a manuscript, that sensation of being fulfilled in having done so is nothing more than a wave of magic running through one's own soul.

The more complex the building is once finished, the more powerful the effect is. The Hogwarts castle's cornerstone had to be something extremely powerful, if the magic that saturated all of the wards and the stone themselves was of indication. He had no time

to waste. With the cornerstone under control, Voldemort would need little effort in squashing them all...the castle would do such a thing by himself.

His thoughts drifted to the clock tower. Was it there then?

His fascination with the place was starting to get on his nerves. There had to be something in there that seemed to soothe his soul, was it the key for the sunken city then?

He reached the end of the staircase that would lead him to the dining hall just in time to see a group of masked imbeciles try and whip out their wands at him. He thanked the polyjuiced potion for the muscles of youth it granted him, as he leaped straight ahead morphing into his ghastly flight form, before landing in the middle of them.

The explosion of entrails of the first two Death Eaters shocked the others enough and blinded them as sprays of blood soon covered in a reddish mist the small group of five. When he walked out of the rear guard of Voldemort's troops, he chuckled to himself and popped a polyjuiced laced candy in his mouth.

"Weaklings." He snorted, and then he began to walk briskly towards the dining hall. The doors of the hall leading outside were open and he narrowed his eyes at the sight of the fluttering of a dark cape in the far off distance, heading towards the clock tower.

Silently, he began to pursue the men while keeping as hidden as possible.

Lillian Potter

Beauxbatons was a bit strange. Except for the fact that it was in France and people spoke French, there was also the strange feeling of being constantly watched over by half the school population at all times. Normally that wouldn't be a problem: she was used to it since Hogwarts, being the Girl-Who-Lived and what not. No, the thing that actually made her feel awkward was that the stares weren't directed at her, but at Fleur Delacour.

The silvery blond older girl was apparently dead set on getting to speak her mind out on her brother, and she followed both she and

Hermione around the school as if she somehow believed they were holding secret meetings with Harry behind her back. She was probably still furious over how she had been manhandled. She had to admit, once she was told just what her brother had done, that it did hold a certain style.

He was already carving yet another legend in the school. 'The White King', as if somehow wherever he went he just emitted this sort of aura that told the others to follow him. It wasn't something to be bothered with, she knew first-hand just how powerful her brother was, but it still did sort of make her worry. It wasn't normal to have people talk about someone after having merely glimpsed at him for mere seconds.

It wasn't normal and it sort of worried her. Just like the fact that Fleur had every now and then a wistful look. Or like the fact that Hermione was being positively skittish the more days passed without news from Harry. Had her friend developed a crush on her brother now?

They were currently watching the sun set over the gardens of Beauxbatons, the lessons finished for the day and nothing better to do, when a flash of gold and red showed the arrival of Harry.

Lillian actually widened her eyes.

Harry was wearing a sword at his side, held within a simple looking leather sheathe. His hair was now nearly all cut roughly, leaving behind a matted ensemble that screamed 'fashion murder' to the winds. He was wearing gloves and his Durmstrang attire looked as if it had been dyed black, albeit there was a sort of metallic gleam coming from the leather. His eyes, however, scared her beyond any belief.

They were cold. Calculating, haunting and dark eyes looked at the three of them for but a moment, before he gestured to Sophie to fly off his extended arm. He took a few steps forward, and in the darkening light she could see heavy rings around his eyes and the pallor of his face more clearly. It was as if he hadn't slept for a moment.

"You know," he croaked, "Being the ruler of Azkaban doesn't magically take away the Dementors' aura." He chuckled grimly. "Is Flamel here?" He asked carefully.

She felt hurt. He hadn't come back to tell them what he had done, but only whereas Flamel was still at Beauxbatons or not. She was just about to verbally lash out at him when Hermione, surprisingly, was the first to yell out loud at him.

"Is Flamel here!?" She screeched. "You disappear in front of us and say nothing to us for days and this is what you ask when you just come back!? Heinrich! I..."

"Harry." He snapped back venomously, as if the name Heinrich was the most offensive insult he could be targeted with. "I am Harry Dursley."

She winced at the sheer intensity of that statement.

Something had to have changed during those brief two days in which Harry hadn't been around them. Something terrible judging by the way he looked and acted.

"Vous-etes le garçon qui m'as sauvé du professeur." Fleur suddenly said in French. Lillian doubted that Harry understood the girl's words, considering how warily he was looking at her as she stood up and moved closer to him.

"Merci beaucoup." And then the girl kissed him on the cheek.

There was silence in the garden, interrupted only by the chirping of the birds around them as her brother looked with surprise at the gesture. She winced when she realized she had been digging her nails into the palm of her hands, quickly removing them as she turned to give a small gaze towards Hermione.

Her friend was giving out a positively murderous gaze to the older girl. The once bushy haired girl seemed to be about to say something, but stopped and looked downcast at the ground. She raised an eyebrow at such action but said nothing, instead turning once more towards Harry to answer his original question.

"Mister Flamel left with the French Navy. They're trying a joint effort with Ireland to stop the man."

Harry's transformation happened in an instant. Instead of a normal blushing teenager his face steeled and his eyes once more turned colder than ice. He gestured to Sophie who had been perched on a nearby tree, and with wonder she looked as the phoenix came back down to grab at his shoulder.

Before she could even react to what was going on, she found herself tackling Harry by the waist. To her shock and surprise, Hermione had done the very same thing on the other side. Leaving behind a perplexed Fleur Delacour, she found herself transported through a shower of fire and flames on the steel deck of what seemed to be a boat.

Only, it was far bigger than a normal boat.

There was a strange humming sound going on in the background. It was like some sort of march-hymn, catchy and yet at the same time haunting. She took a moment to steady herself, but when she finally got up on her feet she stared with surprise at the titanic steel ship she had ended up on. The flags hoisted upon its main deck were representing the golden H of Hogwarts, like she had seen many times. Yet there seemed to be a set of words written beneath the hoisted flag.

The bellowing sound of a horn being sung made her sharply turn around to stare in surprise at a second behemoth of steel that was sailing right next to them.

"Harry." Hermione suddenly exclaimed. "Tell me this isn't true." She whimpered as Lillian saw the girl somehow move to more tightly hold Harry's arm...as if she was afraid of something. It took the girl a moment to see just what had her friend scared.

Tiny flying black dots circled both ships, as what seemed like undead bodies moved across the entire surfaces of the twin ships.

She had never seen such creatures, but when one of the black dots moved closer...she paled.

A Dementor.

The Dementors were circling around the ships and screamed in their strange guttural sounds like seagulls of doom.

"Harry?" Lillian found her voice cracking and breaking from fright. "Where are we?"

"Ah." He replied while his eyes looked like twin cold lakes of ice as Sophie trotted off his shoulder to land on a perch nearby. "Let me present to you the prides of the Fatherland. The first two Bismarck class ships ever to be produced and both sunk in the North Atlantic, where Azkaban is just so aptly located." He grinned.

"We stand atop the Bismarck herself! While following us is the mighty Tirpitz and within their bellies stand a cargo far more powerful than any other!" He chuckled with mirth, "The sons of a bloody past! The Inferi of those who died during the second world wide war...did you know that the second war was a direct result of the blood-filled demands of the first one's capitulation? Did you know that had the demands of the victors not been so bloody, no Hitler would have ever risen? In the belly of these beasts stand the missing soldiers of operation Bagration, the bloodiest loss the Germans ever suffered at the hand of the Russians in 1944...and yet at the same time the highest reached summit of Grindelwald's reign, for it was from those losses that this army was brought forward!"

Harry was smiling wickedly as he shot his right hand forward. The ship they were on lurched as its speed increased. Hermione dropped Harry's hand as if burned, while with a bewildered look the girl looked around in fright at the sight, the full sight, of the Inferis' walking on the bridge and the decks. They all seemed to be wearing the Swastika red badge on their arms, and yet it was easy to see how old and consummated they looked, as if they had spent decades beneath the water.

"Full power to engines! Double time! St. George's Channel awaits us! We have a meeting with destiny people, let's not be late!" Chuckling to himself, Lillian saw Harry slowly turn to sit down at the captain's seat, his hand going to where a captain hat had apparently been placed nearby and putting it on.

"Since you decided to follow me, take a seat and stay still." He intoned quietly, "We'll be pacing ourselves to be there by tomorrow morning. There's not much around here to do, so just stay still and wait...drop to sleep if you want." He whispered in a low murmur.

She slowly let out a breath she didn't know she was holding, when she heard Harry's breath turn more regular and less excited. The light that came from Sophie's perch was enough through the night to look around the sea and the Dementors warily flying around the ships.

She found herself wincing in pain as she slumped down trying to sleep on the uncomfortable chair of the ship. Hermione was instead with her arms around her legs, rocking back and forth as close to Sophie as possible.

The lack of sleep starting to grate on her nerves, she moved near the brown haired girl and sat down in front of her, slightly startling her. She then looked at her in the eyes and whispered quietly.

"I've waited long enough, Hermione." She began, "Now tell me what you and Harry did."

Author's notes

Cliffhanger.

The Bismarck and the Tripitz are both Bismarck-class warships sunk during the second world wide war.

The army of Inferi comes from within the belly of Nurmengard, (As Gellert had successfully understood, they were the sons of a bloody past). The betrayed (Azkaban) are following the one who holds their kin as his own (Betrayed is he too) and finally we get the real deal of what Salazar said. He left his army in Ys, yet is moving towards Hogwarts first? Wouldn't Ys be closer then? Unless, of course, his words were misunderstood and it wasn't Ys at all the true sunken city of the prophecy and he already did his pit-stop in the city...but wasn't Beauxbatons the one with the key? How many sunken city could there be, I wonder?

And Hermione is going through the usual 'saved victim' crush...at least thrice? There is still no pairing, so do not assault me for what happens at the present.

For what happened at Hogwarts to the other professors...you'll know in a following chapter. Till then, see ya later!

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 21

The rolling of the ship woke him up slowly. His half-lidded with sleep eyes opened to the sight of the sun rising over the horizon. He could hear the deep rumbles of the belly of the steel beast as if he was it and she was him. He slowly stood up and walked to the helm of the ship, placing both of his hands on the wooden handles firmly.

The sea glittered as if it was made of diamonds, but when the wail like sound of a Dementor caught his ears, he immediately tensed. The beast remained outside of the window, its screeching voice like that of a nail against a chalkboard.

"We feel them! Forward towards the dawn!" The Dementor's screech was soon followed by the wails of the Inferis' souls and his other brethren, who seemed excited at the idea of fighting. Harry shivered as he felt those emotions wash over him. The bloodlust, the hunger, the desire to fight and rend all came from his troops, and yet he felt them all.

And to the call of his men, he answered with acknowledgement. He grasped the binoculars from the nearby counter, where the electronics of the ship simply stood silent and not working. Magic worked through the ship in place of electricity, magic born of blood and powered through pain and sufferance. The prisoners of Azkaban had to go somewhere, after all. They were all culprits, and if they weren't then the fault was of the ministry to begin with.

He had gone to Azkaban to call the Dementors to his side, and there he had discovered that Gellert had already been a step beyond him. The two warships were practically unscathed as if they had just finished being built. They stood docked within the bowels of the prison deep in the North Sea, unperturbed by the Dementors who merely flew around them with boredom. The aurors had left the prison months before, scared senseless by the Dementors' newly found lack of boundaries.

The prisoners had been kept alive by the creatures themselves, since they did need food after all. Now, as his sight caught the first gleams of ships at the horizon, he frowned. He knew nothing of the range of the Bismarck class ship, but Gellert's notes did say it had a

maximum range on 'light artillery shells' of fifty-five point seven kilometres.

If only he knew how to calculate the distance, or if only there was some sort of holographic aiming utility that turned red when he had them in range, then he'd be far less anxious than he was at the moment. Of course he knew the basics, but the basics had him on a Kharvi with two small cannons. He hadn't been told what to do if he ended up on a Bismarck-class warship with enough firepower to tear down London.

'Fire when in range' seemed an apt command, but he didn't want to risk giving away his position early, especially if he hadn't been seen yet. He was closing in on them though. The speed of the ship wasn't powered by its engines, but by the intent behind the engines' will. Even objects had wills apparently, and the German's boilers and turbines seemed keen on going forward as hard and fast as they could.

He waited as he could hear the various guns of the Bismarck moving into the direction for fire. He squint his eyes as he looked at the flag standing on top of the enemy ship, and with a bated breath he yelled out loud.

"Abort!" He roared, "Abort fire! They're friendlies!" The guns slowly lowered themselves as the ships sailed forward to meet the other ones. He had apparently caught up with the French Navy, who was engaging with what few ships remained to her an audacious pursuit of the Durmstrang ship. The radio suddenly buzzed to life, as if someone was trying to communicate with the ship itself. He opened the channel just as he watched both Lillian and Hermione slowly stand back on their feet, crankily wincing from having slept on the cold floor of the ship's deck.

"Ici est Courbet-classe France de la marine militaire Française...Identifier vous!"

"Here is Bismarck and Tirpitz, Bismarck-class vessels of the Hogwarts' navy." Harry replied calmly. "Something tells me you need help."

"English? Zat iz impozible! Zey are..."

"Pass him to me." Nicholas Flamel's voice reached through the radio. "Harry? What are you doing?"

"Funny you ask." Harry retorted calmly. "I'm doing what I'm meant to do." He chuckled. "Now, before we begin however, there is something I would like you to translate to the Frenchies and to British around you." He added slowly, "Can you do that?"

"All right. Wait a minute...done. Your voice is now on the English, French and Irish ships around the St. George Channel. I'll translate for the French."

Harry took a deep breath, as he looked at his reflection in the mirror giving him the acknowledging nod and a thumb up. It seemed so strange to have the darker side of him actually approve of his message...maybe because underhanded?

"Greetings." He intoned as his reflection rolled his eyes.

Greetings? You have to start a strong soul shivering speech with Greetings? What are you, the evil guy of James Bond?

He ignored King, as he kept on talking.

"My name is Harry Dursley." He offhandedly commented, "And at the moment, I am in charge of the Bismarck Class ships Bismarck and Tirpitz. Considering this ships came out in the second world wide war, I say they are more advanced then whatever sort of wooden rafts you managed to stick together to fight off Durmstrang and the other ships. So here's the problem: I'm actually to be kissed on sight by the British Ministry, but look there, the Dementors obey me and not them. So...where does that leave us? Oh yes. I've got the gun, you've got nothing." He scathingly hissed.

"Still, I'm not a second Voldemort. I'm not a bad guy. I'm here to save the day and save you all, even though a lot of you just don't deserve it." He said clearly, "So here's my offer: full pardon from the English ministry and asylum in France and Ireland to be granted to me, Lillian Potter, Hermione Granger and Rubeus Hagrid no matter when, and you get your victory. You refuse and well, Salazar can have England and then the rest of the world for all I care."

There was silence through the radio. Harry actually felt uncomfortable at the feeling of both Lillian's and Hermione's gaze on him. After a few more minutes of unsettling silence, a voice spoke with a slightly shaky tone through the radio.

"Th-This is Cornelius Fudge, prime minister for Wizardry Britain." Harry held his breath, as he could hear both Lillian and Hermione do the same. "I would...I would like to make it known that..." There was a highly screeched 'Cornelius! You can't do it!' that was soon muted, "I offer full pardon to Harry Dursley, Lillian Potter, Hermione Granger and Rubeus Hagrid."

Silence descended once more over the radio, as he exhaled the deep breath he had in the back of his throat.

"Very well." He replied at the radio. "The Bismarck and the Tirpitz are moving forward at maximum speed. We'll be entering St. George Channel soon enough. Where is Durmstrang?"

"Last sightings had their ships next to Wales." Nicholas replied quickly. "Do you know what you're doing, Harry?"

"Of course." He closed the radio signal, "Not." Harry chuckled, "But I'm whinging it as I go."

"Harry?" Lillian asked him in worry, "What are we going to do?" The girl was hesitantly looking at Hermione as she said that, probably thinking that he had some sort of grand plan in mind to defeat Salazar and his army of wraiths and ghosts. The truth was that he hadn't a plan. He truly was going head on against someone who was centuries older and more powerful than him.

"Take Sophie and go back to Beauxbatons if things turn sour." He replied calmly, as his eyes saw the few remaining French ships coming closer. He turned on the radio once more and barked out.

"We'll be taking the forward position. We'll engage the enemy on sight and hold him there for as long as we can. Stay behind our broadside when we engage them. Our wards should hold." And if they didn't, then he just hoped that the prophecy would give him a final push in the right direction.

"Now listen here youngster..." An old and cranky English voice commented, "You should let us take control of those ships you know? You don't know what you're doing, and..."

"While I would be sincerely amused by your thoughts," he replied smoothly, "I do not have the time to stay and tell you that the only one who can use these ships is me. You are welcomed to try though, but I'm not going to slow down. Stay behind and follow with what you can."

"Mot..." Harry rolled his eyes as he closed the radio once more.

Enjoying the feeling of power? His reflection asked of him from the window, as it slowly began to move to where the reflection of Hermione was. Enjoy seeing your followers blindly coming with you?

He wanted to retort that nobody was actually following him blindly, but the strange awe-like stare of Hermione towards the back of his head made him wary. He had been acting like a sort of hero lately, one proper and prim and dressed in shiny armour. He had to battle a dragon to end the problem once and for all actually, and be claimed a true prince of a kid's story.

He was lost in thoughts, when his sister's voice interrupted the silence of the helm cabin once more.

"Harry?" She asked hesitantly, "I want to fight with you."

"No." He curtly replied. He looked at her with curiosity, considering she recoiled back as if he had backhanded her. What was there to understand? He was the chosen of a prophecy, so he was somehow safe...but he couldn't risk his sister. He actually found himself blushing at the cheesy thought. Him, protecting his sister? He mentally snorted at the idiocy of such a statement. He was just doing it out of loyalty, because the girl hadn't believed a single word of anyone else and had instead trusted in him.

Yes, it was because of that, and not some ill-found brotherly affection. The sky began to darken as the anxious silence stretched for what seemed like hours, until a thunder clap echoed in the distance. A storm was probably converging on the spot, and once more Harry's nightmare made him wince and grit his teeth.

"I'm coming." Hermione stated harshly. "I have to repay you, Harry. Please, you can't do this alone." The girl looked at him too with a mixture of anxiousness and worry, and yet he felt unaffected by it. It wasn't their prophecy, and it wasn't their job to help him. Did Kings not ride alone after all?

"You might die." He hissed back, his eyes locking on Sophie who seemed contently listening in but not moving. "And then what will your pardon be good for?"

"My parents have been obliterated." Hermione replied immediately, "The students at Hogwarts were all too glad to be rid of me, and those in Durmstrang nearly tried to kill me! I have nothing left anywhere! Where you'll go, I'll follow. So please," she began to cry, "let me come with you."

"I'm coming too." Lillian replied, "I...I'm not a weakling brother," she added with haste. "I trained hard, you know? I'm good! I can..."

"Can you kill?" He finally relented, narrowing his eyes on the two girls. They both winced as their face morphed into horrified expressions. "Can you?" He added. When silence was his only reply, he snorted. "I thought so." He turned back to stare at the dark clouds that were now passing over their heads, and as he looked through the binoculars once more, he bit his lip.

There it was. The three iceberg chained Durmstrang, the rear of the fleet of Salazar. Where were still students aboard? And would they be innocent or not? He had to choose, and do it fast as he saw the giant ensemble of ice and ancient wards start to slow down. As a rear guard the complex wasn't a bad decision. It could easily crash into and destroy even the stoutest of ships, especially the old models that the wizards used.

His hands moved to the helm and he took a deep breath.

He turned on the radio on the open channel. He coughed once.

"May I have your attention please? Divert your course. We are passing through."

"Insufferable insects! The great Salazar will not be interrupted during his march of glory!" The reply came with a shocked gasp from

Hermione, who recognized the voice as the Infiltration into Muggle Society professor.

"Are there students aboard the institute, madam?" He asked quietly.

"Ah! Indeed! All have understood and will themselves to be of service to the master of snakes! Who are you? You have not presented yourself!"

Harry simply closed off the radio and raised his right hand up.

"Harry?" Lillian asked as she saw him grab the microphone and push a button to begin the alert for battle. The sirens blared through the ship, soon echoed by the Tirpitz own noises. In the cacophony that followed the Inferis' boots clacked on the steel decks moving to position. The turrets turned to attention towards the incoming mass.

"This is why you can't come. Lillian and Hermione...watch and learn." He snarled as his right hand moved forward.

"All hands to battle stations! FRONTAL ARTILLERY, FIRE!"

The blaring noise of the turrets firing echoed through the ships' frames as the chambers were emptied and reloaded by the Inferis. The bullets of lead and fire flew in the air, their deadly package impacting against the strong wards of the Durmstrang complex as it moved nearer.

"Deliver the broadside!" Harry roared as he spun the helm to the right and slowed down the motors, so as to give the Tirpitz full side view of the school itself. Shots from the anti-air guns soon barrelled against the wards with the cacophony of explosions coming from the bigger turrets. A shower of lead, iron and fire mixed with the magic permeating the turrets of the two German ships. Harry gritted his teeth as he cast a quick eye at the two girls, who were holding their hands around their ears in an effort to keep the noise at bay.

"Main Battery! Fire!" The Anton, Bruno, Casar and Dora cannons fired their heavy payload directly against the wards of the Durmstrang complex. They had the widest range of the entire 'fleet' behind them and as the ship trembled under the shakes from having fired the shots Harry gritted his teeth. The turrets could fire two shots and a half per minute. It meant five shots every two minutes.

Normally, one was enough to level an enemy ship, but considering the wards of Durmstrang, he suspected they'd end up needing a Zhertvy ritual...

He blinked as he remembered something important: the ritual of the Zhertvy had been interrupted by Salazar. So unless the man had put it back...the wards were weaker than usual and were probably concentrated only on the above area like a sort of semi-sphere. There wasn't normally a need to guard the downside of a ship in a naval battle...

But that was decades before the Germans installed on the Tirpitz a torpedo launcher.

"Tirpitz! Bismarck! Recharge and hold fire!" He yelled as he flicked the radio open once more.

"This is a warning I will give only once." He spoke clearly, "Surrender."

"Surrender? Nein! You will not..."

He flicked off the radio and sighed.

"I gave them a chance."

"Harry...no!" Lillian yelled as she dashed forward, trying to grab her brother's arm. "There could be students there!"

He jumped back to avoid his sister's charge at him, but in doing so he ended up having to drop the helm which began to spun wildly.

"Hermione hold the helm!" He yelled as he grabbed a hold of his sister's arms and tried to push her off him. The ship began to turn wildly, as the waves that crashed against its sides sent her to divert her course. He winced as he rolled on the side, pushing the girl against the wall. "What is wrong with you!?" He yelled at her.

"You can't do this!" She yelled back. "What about the innocents!?"

"You heard the woman!" He retorted, "And there's no choice!" He swiped his right hand back and forward, his gaze settled on the Tirpitz.

"Tirpitz! Torpedo Launchers! FIR..urgh!" Lillian had tackled him on the ground, as a thunderbolt detonated near them, blinding the surroundings.

Let me stop her! King bellowed in his throbbing ears as blood rushed to his head. How could the girl not understand!? There wasn't another choice and they were going to die if she kept this up!

"GET OFF ME!" He roared as with inhuman force he lifted his sister and flung her away. Her body hit against the metallic counter that once had probably been used for telegram operations.

He huffed from the effort, as he took ragged breaths before placing his hands back at the helm. A scared Hermione dropped the wooden wheel as if it was a snake ready to bite at her, before running to check on Lillian. He nearly retched. The girl had decked him in the stomach and the sides too: she truly packed a punch. He had to mentally refrain from cursing his good will. He didn't have the time to mentally berate what he had done, because he finally had to give the order out.

"Tirpitz...Fire the torpedoes."

His body gasped with relief as a weight lifted from his shoulder at the feeling of completion his order had done. He felt the torpedoes fly beneath the water, even though he had no visual on them, and as he sensed them nearing, he raised his right hand once more. Rain was pouring down from the sky as he looked at the titanic construction that Durmstrang was and its giant icebergs coming dangerously closer to them. He saw its massive bulk and its seemingly unscathed wards flicker briefly against the downpour of rain and the thunders. He took a deep breath to calm himself once more, before closing his eyes and bringing his right arm forward.

"TIRPITZ, BISMARCK! FULL BROADSIDE DELIVERY! FIRE!"

And then, he turned on the radio once more.

"Pathetic attempt! You will not...what is..." An explosion rocked the closest iceberg of Durmstrang as cracks seeped through the giant ice cube, tearing apart heavy chunks of ice as the wards flickered like dying shields. The volley of shots that could level a city came

next, and the wards died down just as the mighty main battery of the Tirpitz and the Bismarck fired again, tearing apart giant chunks of both ice and stone and sending it crashing down into the sea.

"I don't know if you can hear me," he spoke to the radio, "But you just lost your wards." He added as this time he moved his left hand in a circle above him, before pointing at the complex. "Surrender: this is your last chance."

No reply but static came back, and Harry closed his eyes firmly before nodding to himself.

"As you wish." He placed the radio microphone back in place, before looking at the Dementors stationed outside the Helm's cabin.

"CAPTURE THE COMPLEX! KILL THOSE WHO OPPOSE MY WILL!" He wailed in their tongue as the Dementors shrieked back their acknowledgement of the order. With the wards down, and the complex actually slowing down to a near halt, the flying monsters of nightmares assaulted the structure like a massive blanket of deathly fog.

Harry looked at the Dementors flying through the night air, while mentally he was actually recalling the Wagner's Valkyries charge. He grinned slightly as he increased once more the speed of the engines...or well, of the magic that made the engines work.

It was then that a sharp cry came from behind him, and as he turned around in worry he stared with shock and fright at Sophie's feathers burning ever so slightly. The phoenix had just died a bit more, and he felt horrible. He gritted his teeth as he turned to stare once more at the sea.

"I told you to leave me, Sophie." He hissed, closing his eyes and desperately trying to keep out of his head the cries of the phoenix. "There's Lillian over there who'd be a better owner than me." He murmured. "I'm not worthy of the light, Sophie."

His place was in the darkness, after all. It was then that his eyes settled on the rest of the fleet of Salazar...that was turning back? Why would they...the first volley of shots from a few enemy ships hit blank, raising torrential levels of water all around the Bismarck as the Tirpitz answered the fire with her own main battery. Ghosts and

wraiths flew in the air like flocks of birds, and as they neared the anti-air batteries of both ships answered with barrages of bullets.

The question remained at the front of his head however...how?

Salazar Slytherin

Blackbeard had disappeared the moment the wards of Durmstrang had lost their power. Salazar was many things, but a fool he was not. Blackbeard wasn't just a ghost: he was the guardian of the cornerstone's wards. He had placed him there a long time before to ensure nothing would tamper with them, just like he had done to Hogwarts with Peeves. He gritted his teeth as he now looked in front of him at the two giant steel coffins that seemed to be strangely resistant to getting hit.

"Bismarck and Tirpitz." He muttered, using magic to see their names on their flanks. Next to them in the background stood the half-sunken Durmstrang complex, one of its three icebergs slowly dropping below the level of the sea.

The Tirpitz was the closer to them, and thus flicking his wand Salazar gestured to the Inferi that followed his command.

"Take down that ship." He snarled as he called down from the storm itself a volley of thunder bolts. The electricity crackled as it followed the conduit that magic had created for it, but while the thunders did incinerate the few unlucky Inferi in the proximity, the ship's steel frame apparently refused to be broken or torn apart.

He raised an eyebrow in surprise. He flicked his wand again, as a tidal wave suddenly enlarged itself in size as it became their opening move. He wondered how the steel boats would fare against such a thing, considering they'd need far more powerful mages to open a passage through...

They fired. The noise and the shells hitting forward, coupled with strange underwater explosions tore apart the wave before it could reach a big enough height. The fact that the shells exploded within the water made him narrow his eyes. That wasn't a normal behaviour. Cannon balls didn't explode midway. Was it something that had happened after his near disappearance and risky resurrection?

A frown marred his lips as he saw the Proteus' barrage end up in the water, just like the Juno and the Insurgent own shots missed in the dark and bubbling water that was now surrounding them. He understood there and then what was going on. He couldn't help but slightly smirk at the sheer coincidence of what this entailed.

The wards that fed on a soul's pain were something he had created a long time before, to power the wards around Hogwarts by tying criminals' souls to them. Little by little he had delivered said secrets to Nurmengard, and while Beauxbatons had refused him, they still had kept his missives too. The problem was when two similar wards ended up coming into contact. It normally was not possible for it to happen, since wards were after all meant to be stationary, but when it did...the two wards, no matter which was stronger or which was weaker, tended to try and merge together.

The bubbling and the rising of the waves' height around them was a subtle signal he had missed. He hadn't been able to wound the enemy ships because by the very same wards he had built those ships were actually his, and viceversa. This was a battle that could not be won with only magic. He'd have to take the initiative himself.

"Have the Durmstrang fire." He ordered quietly to a nearby ghost, an old Viking who grumbled an affirmative reply before flying off, to where the giant ship of Durmstrang stood. The giant head of the mast opened its mouth like a bellowing dragon, a cannon's hole showing itself from within it.

As the rain fell down more strongly than ever, and the enemy ships prepared for another volley, he smirked.

He swept his wand across the wards surrounding 'his' ships. The moment he brought them all down...

Both sides fired.

His left hand shot forward as he banished from in front of him the incoming projectiles that exploded upon the contact with the invisible repelling surface and flung the shrapnel within backwards. Yet instead of going back in a cone shaped explosion they simply diverted to the sides, tearing chunks of wood away from the Proteus and the Juno. There was more than a mere difference in technology

between the ships, there was something else directing the shots and...

He closed his eyes and concentrated. He brought up his wand and began to make slow circular motions as more and more shots burst forward from both sides. He heard the tell-tale signs of a ship exploding, soon followed by the creaking sounds of a mast falling down from the effort to battle the winds. He spun his wand again and again, and he could feel the direction of the Queen's Anne Revenge change abruptly, as the water became a maelstrom.

He heard the wood creak together with the noise of the thunder crashing down near them. In the ghastly scenery of when he opened his eyes again, he stared with an angry glare at the figure that stood hidden and out of side flying near them. He looked at her with a fury that held no other desire but to destroy her, and with an unholy screech of anger and hatred he plunged all of his power into the most powerful spell he had ever known.

"Interneco!" His wand nearly burst apart as a purplish ray flew forward from its tip and against the figure flying in mid-air. Halfway through, the ray was met with another, and the two ended up locked in a contest of wills. In that moment, the Bismarck fired from its main battery once more. The shots hit the deck of the Queen's Anne Revenge and exploded, tearing the ship apart in two as the shrapnel burned the Inferi and butchered them.

Salazar disappeared before other shells could hit him, reappearing atop the Durmstrang's helm deck with an angry glare at where the Queen's Anne Revenge was now sinking. The ship itself wasn't the best of the fleet: too slow and with only few powerful armaments to speak of. Unluckily having the great idea of using it for 'seamanship' practice had made it weaker. Even when armed, it was a miracle by itself that the ship hadn't been torn apart in the weather.

He brought up the invisibility cloak to cover himself, as he wickedly smiled and flew in the air few instants later. His wand spun around him, as a maelstrom appeared within the water, forcing the heavier ships to spin around and the nimbler ones to deftly circle it. He increased its size, staring with not even a hint of worry at the sinking of what few ships his fleet had that were of no importance to him. The Durmstrang's main cannon however, that was a different thing.

He didn't even tell the ship to steer. She would do her job one last time by taking down the enemy's commanding ship. The dragon's maw of the ship charged its deadly shot of bridled magic and power, and as the carved dragon itself screamed the cannon ball sped through the air with a speed that made it difficult to even follow.

In that precise moment, the Tripitz ship, that had been spinning wildly trying to control herself, ended up in the line of fire. The ball hit the steel warship, not only tearing through its thick armour as if it was paper, but also crumbling a good chunk of it down as it decayed. It was as if centuries of rust had suddenly piled up on the ship that began to dismember into smaller parts of rusted steel components as it crumbled in the maelstrom of water.

Salazar couldn't help but laugh.

The mighty ships had been repaired because of transfigured objects! The cannon ball shot from the mouth of the Durmstrang ship wasn't a mere cannon ball. It was laced with powerful magic that held but one purpose: to kill magic. It did not drain magic. It did not absorb magic. It killed her. It literally tore it apart from existence wherever it hit. It was the foulest type of dark curse ever to be built...and he had been there to watch the cannon mounted.

A wizard would die or without doubt become a muggle, leaving behind only muggles even if he married a pureblood. A ward would be broken and destroyed. A transfigured object would return to its base form...and remain like that, no matter what spells would be placed to reconfigure it back or to hold it like that. There was nothing to be done to something that had been 'killed' of its magic.

The Tirpitz sunk beneath the maelstrom, as the Bismarck instead appeared to be aiming at the Durmstrang ship with her rear battery.

Salazar frowned slightly, before bringing his right wand forward and shooting a simple curse, really, against the ship.

The next moment, the shells that should have been exploded from within the chambers of fire of the rear battery detonated instead. The sudden halt in power to the engines brought the ship to a standstill against the maelstrom's current that began to bring the ship down.

Just as he watched the ship beginning to sink down, he turned ready to fly towards the Durmstrang complex and claim it back for his later use. The Durmstrang ship exploded into smithereens as he gave his back to it, the main battery of the Bismarck giving the ship one last shot as it began to sink down to its depths.

"Trudo!" A voice yelled behind him, that he countered with ease through the use of his own wand silently.

He turned around to stare at the boy, the boy that he had once claimed as his successor and that stood flying lifted by a phoenix.

"Really?" Salazar found himself asking. "How..." He looked at the water hitting around the cloak he was wearing. "Of course." He muttered.

The boy looked at him with cold, calculating eyes. He smelt the fear radiating from him, but deeply hidden within a mask of calm.

"Afraid?" He asked with a chuckle. "I find it stupid that you dare come again in front of me," He commented as the thunder struck in the distance. "I spared you once. I will not do so again."

"I am not afraid." The brat replied, holding his wand that sparked crimson tightly as if it was his anchor of safety.

"Maybe you aren't, but that would only make you a fool." Salazar snorted, as he shot a powerful wave of curses towards the brat. "What do you think you're doing, brat? Fulfilling a prophecy? You're not worthy of the secrets of the sunken city!"

The brat's phoenix dodged, flying in the storm with speed as it sang the horrendous screeching noise that he so much abhorred.

He flew behind the brat, spewing vile curses at his back as he laughed.

"You think you can stop me!?" The figure laughed. "Hogwarts was but an extra stop. Ys is mine already child! And nobody was around when I claimed it the first time!"

He could feel it, the boy tensing as the phoenix flapped its wings around. He knew where the bird was going to land, and with a quick wand motion...

He shot a silent curse behind him.

The shocked face of Nicholas Flamel came into view, the invisibility spell dropped from him as a curse brought out crimson blood from his chest.

"My...how long." He nearly cooed with disdain as he felt the boy move further away from him.

"The years have not treated you well." He quietly added, anger and hatred filling his eyes.

"Salazar..." The man coughed as his own wand was brought to his chest, to stop the bleeding.

"Do not be so familiar with me!" He hissed back with rage. "Betrayals after betrayals...Now no more! Are you scared? Scared I will reach Hogwarts before you? You never managed to win cleanly against me after all. Always had to lie. Always had to deceive. I was cunning, ambitious and powerful...you were and are nothing more than a betrayer!"

"I can..."

"Explain? What?" The head of Slytherin chuckled. "There is nothing to explain. My heir marches into Hogwarts by now. He will claim back my laboratory. He will wait for me and once my hands will be on the Philosopher's stone made till now, nothing will stop me!"

"Salazar! Please..."

"Oh...I see now." The man snickered. "You lost your own, did you not?" He laughed. "What little you had is finishing. You want more."

Nicholas Flamel said nothing, he merely sighed as from behind his back he took out the sorting hat. His right hand entered it, and from within it a sword glistened out.

"I did not want for this to come to pass." The old man spoke with a far deeper voice. "But you leave me no choice, old friend."

Beneath the thick descending rain, as thunders roared and screams of dying souls echoed in the background of the deep dark water that lurched around the breaking apart ships, two men looked at one another with narrowed glares.

"As always, you try and fight me disarmed. Are you afraid? Afraid of Iniura?" Salazar mocked him as he transfigured the rain into a deadly ice sword.

"Come then." Salazar chuckled holding the ice sword.

"Come and meet your end for the last time..." He intoned, "Godric Gryffindor."

Author's notes

And blam.

Chapter gone by again. I thought I would delve into what's going on at Hogwarts, but I always come back to Harry and Salazar.

As it was pointed out, the Tirpitz and the Bismarck are both sunk, but the Tirpitz was actually dismembered into pieces. The simple answer is that: The Reparo spell of the wizards repairs everything.

Now, before claiming 'what the hell'...read the wiki.

This charm was invented by Orabella Nuttley, an employee of the Improper Use of Magic Office in the British Ministry of Magic, in or before 1754. She used her charm to repair the Colosseum after it had been accidentally destroyed.

The colosseum.

The damn bastards of the British wizards destroyed the Italian colosseum and repaired it.

Except for the fact that I'm claiming a blood feud on the brits, it just shows how 'overly simple yet powerful' their spells are. Reparo 'repairs' It doesn't matter how little remains, what matters is that it

can be repaired if only fragments stay. (Which led me to use it with transfigured objects to 'repair' the Tirpitz)

I am actually shocked. They tore down the colosseum.

Yet they also managed to hide it from all the muggles...I imagine how hard it had to be.

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 22

The rain fell heavily as Sophie cried to the crying skies. The maelstrom behind them was all but forgotten as he let his phoenix fly him to safety. Such power at Salazar's disposal wasn't normal. Such strength, such ability, such prowess was something he had not been prepared to fight. He doubted he'd ever be ready to fight such an enemy, and yet he had no choice on the matter now, did he?

He had made a stand the moment he had chosen the ring. Now it was all a matter of keeping to his choices till the end. The sound of a clash echoed behind him as Sophie screamed in fright at the sight of the storm clouds twirling and twisting into typhoons. Magic surrounded them as he felt his skin tingle and start to weight down on his entire body.

Drop the bird. Drop. The. Bird.

"Wh..."

DROP THE BIRD!

He twisted to the side, not understanding but obeying as Sophie suddenly let go and screeched. He began to fall towards the water, as the air typhoons connected with the water surface as the wave rose and crashed against the barely afloat boats of the allied fleet. He could hear and feel the pulse of magic wash over the entire area, and as he felt that an enormous weight dropped on his back. Sophie cried one last time, before spontaneously combusting into fire as a typhoon of wind and water engulfed the flying phoenix.

He would have been torn apart from the speed of the wind had he still been brought around by Sophie. Now, however, he was falling down with increased speed against the water's surface. His thoughts went to his wand. He held it firmly as the wind hit his face and brought tears to his eyes. His glasses fell apart as the free fall seemed not to be cushioned.

Near him, he could hear the sounds of sword clashing and the noise of thunder claps echoing as if just behind him. The water surface grew neared by the second, and yet his wand felt cold and his hand

frozen in fright. It was closer. Closer and closer he came as a wave rose to the side of him, as if to engulf his body as soon as he crashed into the water.

He wasn't going to survive if he couldn't break his fall!

Gellert Grindelwald

The wind howled in the clock tower's pendulum room. The pendulum moved to the right and to the left with mechanical strides. It seemed unfazed by the fact that two dark lords, the one of the past and the one of the present, stood one in front of the other separated only by his metallic swinging. He couldn't fault the pendulum: it was but an object. His wand rose just as Voldemort's own did the same.

"My followers?" The dark lord of the present hissed.

"Weaklings I destroyed." He replied with a smug grin. "If those were the extent of your strength, I wonder for Britain's future."

Voldemort sneered, before his lips curled in a small smile.

"So young and yet so powerful? You could become great as my apprentice." The Dark Lord smoothly pointed out. The pendulum moved with a tick to the right, before doing a tock to the left.

"You're right." He replied with a smirk. "And yet you're wrong." He added, before quickly sidestepping right to avoid a green colored curse. "Avada Kedavra? Really?" Gellert chuckled as he rolled to the left to avoid a set of more curses.

"If you do not wish to follow, then you're wasting my time." The pendulum ticked and Voldemort disappeared from sight. He was gone too. Disillusioned charms were illegal in duels, but this wasn't a duel after all: it was a fight. There was all a set of steps before a true battle between wizards could begin. Firstly, there was a battle to find the enemy wizard. Generally both sides managed it so quickly that neither died in the first step.

The second step was a Legilimency and Occlumency battle. Once eyes met if one of the two contestants could enter the mind of the other and wreck enough damage, then the battle was already over.

Otherwise step three was the usual battling to overpower the opponent.

The pendulum swung, and both silently brought down the enemy's disillusionment. The mental attack began the second their eyes met, and since both held their ground spells began to fly. He hadn't thought about the Pendulum being a problem, thinking he could just blast it off.

He had been wrong.

A curse to make a man's entrails explode bounced off the pendulum and nearly hit him, as the metal plate began to glow a soft red. He narrowed his eyes but said nothing, gritting his teeth as he kept on moving and avoiding the deftly placed attacks of Voldemort. He thanked his polyjuiced age for that. He had always preferred a more mobile style to a fixed one, but the years hadn't been kind on his bones. As Basileus he could use a silent Leviosa to run on a wall, jump in mid-air and send a wave of crushing and cutting curses back at Voldemort.

As Gellert he would have probably moved out of the tower to avoid having to take care of the pendulum. His wand deflected a dark curse and he couldn't help but soften his features at that. He had created the curse to make one's own eye bulbs liquefy. It was kind of nostalgic battling this fledgling dark lord who believed himself at the top of the world.

"Well?" He asked after a moment, "Is this all you have?"

"How is this possible...who are you?" Voldemort found himself asking the question that made him smile slowly and gently.

"Ah...I'm a man." He replied with a small chuckle. "I'm a wizard. I'm a charismatic leader. I'm a Ravenclaw Head Boy. I'm a Hogwarts student." He added carefully, "I'm the one who killed Dumbledore." To those words, Voldemort's eyes shone with fury.

"You!?" The sneer slowly morphed into a mocking tone. "Maybe I shouldn't be surprised. Albus was growing old after all."

"Oh?" He inclined his head to the side. "So you aren't here looking for him?"

"Hardly." Voldemort rolled his eyes. "I was surprised he did not come out, as I was surprised by the chaos that..." He narrowed his eyes. "So you are responsible for that mess?"

"Partly, I admit." He replied without much of a tone, "The rest was the work of my gracious son." He added, "He planted the seeds of discord in the school during his first year. You actually should be proud at him: he destroyed the Gryffindor's reputation."

"Son?" Voldemort raised an eyebrow. "You can't be a student. You can't be a vampire or...a ghost, you...you're under Polyjuice aren't you?"

"My fault: it appears I'll have to obliviate you afterwards." Gellert chuckled, his wand slowly rising up.

"You? Defeat me? Whoever you are you hold no chance against me! I am Lord Voldemort!" The pendulum swerved to the right striking the wall and embedding itself deeply into it, before slowly resuming its normal movement.

"And I am the master of Death's wand." And with a smirk the Elder wand, the wand that Dumbledore had held in the moment of his death, shot forward another deadly spell. This time the spell spun around in circle, avoiding the pendulum as it struck straight through Voldemort's shield and passed the man from side to side. The curse burst every vessel into the Dark Lord's body, and as he lay there bleeding to his death, Voldemort couldn't help but cough out a feeble.

"H...How? I..."

"I underpowered my spells." Gellert subtly remarked. "You are a youngster, Voldemort. You are as subtle in battle as an elephant, but had I begun casting my most powerful curses with the power to tear apart your shield, you would have not lowered your guard." He slowly walked closer to the dying Lord. "And that is why you lost."

The pendulum ticked again, this time its side carving a deep hole into the left of the hall, before resuming its normal movements. Something was wrong with it, but he couldn't understand just what it was. He blinked as the pendulum carved yet another line in the wall,

but when it turned back on the other side stood another Gellert, pointing his wand at him with a surprised look on his face.

"What in the name of Merlin..." He whispered, as the pendulum carved a fourth line within the walls. There were now three deep lines per side, and within moments each of them suddenly held a pendulum that seemed to move as an after-image. He randomly saw through their movements a Gellert, or a Voldemort bleeding or taunting sometimes. He saw himself running up the wall and casting from mid-air. He heard his words echo like a maddening symphony.

He dashed trying to get out of the pendulum's room.

He didn't come out from the other side.

The pendulum went tick and tock quietly, as it went its normal right and left movement without anything strange perturbing it. Only the bleeding body of Voldemort stood on the ground there and then.

The ring with the stone of resurrection was still neatly on the man's finger.

And it shone brightly.

Lily Potter

They were holed in Dumbledore's office. The floo had been disconnected after Dumbledore's death, and with no clear cut way out she and the rest of the faculty teachers had ended up going for the Headmaster's office to grab the key to the wards and try and drop them down in order to get the aurors to apparated directly into the office. The problem was nobody, not even Minerva, knew what the keys were or where they had been hidden.

To complicate matters, as soon as they had entered, the school had locked down the office preventing any of them from leaving the premises to ascertain if the other students were safe or not. Quietly thus, the teachers stood in wait in the office of the Headmaster.

"I can't believe he's dead." Pomfrey whispered sadly. "Killed by a stray curse..."

"If that's a stray curse that did Dumbledore in then I'm a dunce." Minerva replied in thick Scottish accent. "It was the killing curse."

"Indeed." Filius squeaked. "I saw the color and the form...I hope I am wrong, but it looked like a student cast it."

"Imperius." James ended up whispering, "Has to be that."

"Of course one should now start arguing whether it runs in the blood," Severus sneered. "Two out of two Potter? I wonder if you're blood is darker than what is usually thought."

"Snivellus! You greasy..." James' words died in his mouth as the floo flared to life.

The silver hair of Albus Dumbledore soon was followed by the rest of the Headmaster's body, as the old man walked out of the fire pit with relative ease.

The room was silent, as the old wizard eyed them all carefully before making a small smile with his lips.

"Lemon drop, anyone?"

Ginny Malfoy

"We have to go." Luna dreamily replied to her, standing guard to a corridor that was meant to lead into the old Slytherin's common room and that instead was now used as a cell. Madam Pomfrey was inside too, having voluntarily decided she'd be of better service inside the cells rather than outside. It was kind of funny really, how they had trapped the 'proper and prim' houses accusing them of having given out the first shot in the ensuing chaos.

Even if it wasn't true, it was what had been told to everyone before shoving them in. The entire moral defense of the Gryffindors and the Hufflepuffs was now utterly shattered and in pieces. Many of the first years entrapped within the stone prison were crying, as she had repeatedly seen every moment she opened the door to push in one more unconscious body.

It was a surprise that nobody had yet tried to escape, but considering their general wounded state, she doubted they'd be able to move at all.

She frowned at the small blond haired girl who seemed to have started walking out and towards the deepest parts of the Hogwarts' dungeons.

"Luna!" Ginny hissed at her, "Where do you think you're going!" Her hand stretched to grab the wrist of the small girl. "We've been given an order."

The girl whimpered as she suddenly screamed. The shock was enough to make Ginny drop her. It had never happened for Luna to be so vocal on something, and to scream and act like a small girl instead of her usual dreamy self was something even more bizarre.

"Luna?" She softly added as she saw the blond haired girl start to sob and cry.

"Nargles are everywhere!" She whimpered, her arms moving to embrace herself as if she was feeling cold. "They're coming. They're...we have to leave. Now." She pleaded, "If we don't..."

"What are you speaking about, Luna?" Ginny tried one last time.

"The sin of the Raven." Luna whispered, "The pride of the Badger. The ambition of the Snake. The ruthlessness of the Lion. They chained it. They bound it. We're not safe. We must leave." The girl took another step towards the deepest sides of the darkness that was strangely now surrounding the two girls, far away from the light of the torches in the walls near the Slytherin's dungeons entrance.

"What? What did they chain?" Ginny asked strangely afraid as she could feel a cold hiss echo through the darkening corridors. The lights of the torches flickered as if a strong gale had just passed through them.

A soft breeze suddenly arched her back as she flinched. The silence in the corridor, interrupted only by their breaths and by the whimpers and tears of Luna, suddenly was broken by a voice.

It was a voice that she sort of remembered in first year, sometimes high, sometimes low, always going around pranking people.

"My...That would be me."

She turned to face the voice that had whispered behind her.

In the dim light of the corridor, Peeves stood glistening in his etherealness.

"Heaven has no rage like love to hatred turned," the poltergeist intoned mockingly, before winking and disappearing.

She turned around hearing a slump and quickly dashed to where Luna had slumped on the ground. The blond haired girl was trembling and clutching her shoulders with her hands, sobs and tears coming out of her mouth and eyes as she shook her head with strength.

"Luna?" She asked the Ravenclaw girl as she got down on one knee near her.

"We...We're all going to die."

"Why? Why are you saying this? It's just Peeves!" Ginny snapped at the girl who merely laughed bitterly.

"Not what he is, but what he represents...we...we have to leave. Please, let's go."

Ginny bit her lip, before slowly helping the girl back up.

"Let's go and talk with Draco, all right?" She began carefully, "The exit is this way."

"No." Luna whispered. "That way is death. This way." Suddenly Ginny found herself losing hold of the girl's shoulder, as the girl began to dash towards the pitch black darkness of the dungeons. She stopped for a moment, looking back at the red haired 'Malfoy'.

Ginny sighed. She wheezed and then she relented with a nod.

"I'm coming." Just as she began to dash to follow Luna, she gave a small glance back to where the door was. "Piton!" She yelled out loud as the secret entrance began to swing open. She didn't stay to look at who would leave first or if they'd run out of there.

She had done this for her brothers, nothing more.

Lillian Potter

"And that's all I remember, sir." She meekly said to the prime minister of Magical Britain, Cornelius Fudge. The man was awkwardly looking at her with a sort of worried gaze, before shrugging slightly and turning to face the witch next to him.

"Undersecretary Umbridge?" Cornelius' voice was filled with hesitation, as the pudgy looking woman next to him smiled sweetly and brought forth a fresh parchment.

"Yes minister, here is the pardon draft. Of course this applies only if Mr. Dursley defeats Salazar." The old woman's voice hit like a sharp whip, "This is a pardon for extraordinary circumstances after all. Murderers shouldn't be let go scot-free."

"We aren't murderers." She replied hotly. "We didn't kill anyone."

"Now, now." The Undersecretary made a tut-tut sound with her throat, "There are eyewitnesses and Miss. Granger has already been trialed guilty. There is no reason to keep on refuting your charges: you wouldn't have escaped otherwise."

"They were going to kiss me." Hermione muttered darkly, "Weren't it for Harry saving me, I'd be nothing more than a breathing corpse."

"Now that's preposterous dear," Dolores coughed lightly, "The Dementors of Azkaban are under the control of the ministry and..."

"Minister." A gruff voice grumbled, entering the small cabin in one of the British remaining ships where they had ended up brought by Sophie, "The Dementors are claiming Durmstrang for their lord."

Cornelius blinked, before smiling slightly.

"See? They clearly have..."

"Actually, they say that only the King may order them around." The voice belonged to an old and portly man with an eye-patch over his left eye. Dirty and mangy grey hair was coupled with a tightly knotted beard. His only eye was a bright blue color. He was wearing an old jumper and a pair of loose trousers, and at his waist he had a sheathed scimitar.

Dolores paled as if she had swallowed a bitter pill, while the Prime Minister grimaced. Hermione displayed a triumphant smirk, crossing her arms over her chest.

"Something the problem?" She mocked them. Lillian actually was surprised by the girl's tone. Her friend always had a near deferential respect for figures of authority. This Hermione however was extremely different. Her hair was no longer bushy but instead neat, her eyes didn't have the normal shine they held once but were instead cold and uncaring. The smirk she displayed wasn't of amusement, but partly a sneer and partly a sort of subtle jab at trying again, as if she took great fun in seeing the minister fail. The fact she had lost most of her weight and looked far more like a woman than like a teen was probably only adding to the effect.

She knew on the other hand how different she looked. She wasn't chubby, but her arms were slightly toned from holding on to the broom for Quidditch, her hair was fluffy and cleaned thoroughly, whereas Hermione's was simply clean. She was wearing the Beauxbatons student's attire just like Hermione, yet the girl had transfigured hers into a more comfortable one the split second she had realized there was a fight going on.

Hermione was practical. She wasn't.

She couldn't help but feel a bit of envy and longing at the mere growing up that the girl had gone through. They had spoken at length that night on the warship Bismarck, and the tales that Hermione had regaled her with had been enough to make her green: both with envy and with disgust. Training with Grindelwald, learning in Durmstrang, ending up chained for a ritual that required blood, being saved time and time again by Harry. Her brother's prowess was something that Hermione delighted into narrating. It was as if she viewed her brother like an undefeatable wizard on par with Dumbledore or Voldemort himself.

"No," Cornelius caught himself quickly, "There isn't a problem. Miss Granger, Miss Potter, I will sign your pardon myself together with Mister Hagrid and Mister Potter once I receive news this...enemy has been defeated." He commented gesturing for a quill from his aide, who promptly delivered one with a bottle of ink.

She nodded absentmindedly. Cornelius turned to speak with the probable captain of the ship they were in, telling him not to bother with Durmstrang and to keep an eye out on the battle going on. After a few minutes, the ship began to roll wildly.

"Merlin's beard, what's going on!?" Cornelius exclaimed frightened, as the captain left the room to check.

"Goodness gracious." Dolores commented.

"The Bismarck class ships wield a main battery composed of high yield explosives weighting eight-hundred kilos each." Hermione spoke quietly, "The Tirpitz is also equipped with torpedo launchers and anti-air batteries. What you are hearing now is them engaging Salazar's fleet...probably." She closed her eyes, mumbling something about how stupid Harry was in having made them leave the ships.

"There's a maelstrom in front of us!" A yell came from outside the door. "Mother of Merlin! Look at that! The ship's sinking!" Another scream erupted from around them.

Unease settled in the minister, who began to cough and laugh nervously.

"Weatherby? Be a dear and get the captain to stand off, all right?" Dolores Umbridge spoke kindly to the old man, who was the assistant of Cornelius. Weatherby nodded and opened the door.

The next moment, the ship nearly rolled as a giant wave crashed against its side. Water poured in and brought the minister's secretary out screaming, as if a giant hand of water had grasped him. The old man's screams were lost as the door closed shut a second later. In the shocked silence that soon followed, she wearily blinked and slowly wobbled on her feet.

Hermione was faster. She was opening the door and moving out into the downpour of rain even before she had the time to think on what to do. She soon followed the brown haired girl out in the deluge, her feet nearly slipping on the wet and slick floor of the ship. She repressed a scream at the horrific sight in front of her.

Her brother was flying, a tiny golden speck up in the sky, surrounded by wind tornadoes. Another tiny figure was flinging spells at him, and as he dodged a few of them with the thunder bolts striking down alongside the water, she felt her throat constrict from fright. In a second, the second figure stilled and turned around, talking to a third flying one. Her eyes however followed her brother, who was practically getting caged by the whirlwinds. Then, as if on cue, her brother began to fall.

She heard someone screaming. She turned around just in time to see one tidal wave heading their way, before realizing that the one screaming wasn't Hermione...but herself.

Harry Dursley

It was a white room.

There were no walls. There were no benches, no earth, no grass, no floor and no limits to the white for as far as his sight went. It didn't hurt however. He looked at his hands and winced. They were normal. No wounds, no signs of the Deathly Hallows symbol, no apparent scar to mar his body. Had he died?

Impacting against water at such a high speed would be the same as impacting against concrete. That much he knew without even having to think much about it. He had even fallen head first into the water, so his neck had probably snapped together with the rest of his body upon impact. It had to have been a quick death, since he didn't remember any pain.

"Don't underestimate us." A voice amusedly commented from behind him. He turned quickly, his posture tensing. His eyes widened in disbelief at the sight of King standing atop a mount of skulls and torn limbs. Blood seemed to cake his hair and his body looked flailed, with thick reddish veins that shone an eerie crimson color. He was holding a gnarled staff made of flesh and bones. His smile was feral, and his eyes were reddish. A small fog-like vapor

covered his body, and the tendrils of smoke seemed to swish around like tentacles.

He looked shocked at the entire show that King had put up. He took a step backwards, and the smile on King's face morphed into an angry scowl.

"Really?" The boy snarled. "After all we've done together?"

He flinched and stopped. He looked at their surroundings, slowly morphing from the white color to a more realistic setting. It was the backyard of the Dursley's home. His heart clenched as he could hear his father's voice boom into the kitchen, and his mother answer him.

"Do you want to go in?" King asked, pointing at the back door. "You can, you know?"

"But...they're dead." He managed to hitch out with his throat strangely hoarse.

"Of course," King nodded, "But you can join them." He smiled again. "Peace would be yours here." The boy's right hand circled as if to gesture to all that encompassed them. "Haven't you always wished for peace? Quiet? Tranquility?" King pressed on. "It can be yours."

"What about you?" He found himself asking. "Why are you offering me this?"

"I can save us." King replied shrugging. "But to do so," hastily he added as he got off the pile of limbs and blood, "I need you to trust me...and to go inside the house."

He blinked in surprise. His head turning from King who was showing him a completely serious face to the back door of the house he had lived in for years. He took a step towards the back door of Privet Drive, Number four...and stopped as a deadly cold feeling washed over him.

"Harry? What are you doing back here so soon?" A voice he knew asked him, as the door was opened for him.

"No." He whispered as tears began to fall from his face. He shook his head strongly as he shuddered. "No. No. You can't be serious."

"Vernon will be back soon. Are you sure they won't miss you at school?"

"You...You..." He turned around with tears, his right hand clenching a wand he hadn't even believed to be holding a moment ago.

"Harry? Are you all right son?"

King was looking at him with an angry glare. His red eyes, dark hair and features slowly morphing bit by bit into another face...one he was so much familiar with it made him retch.

"Imperius."

"You're not me." He whispered in disbelief. "You're not here to help me." He added quietly.

King smirked and grinned, as his face morphed into an angry scowling look. He rose up, like the adult he actually was.

"Young Malfoy was really correct." The voice silkily said. "A lord is no match for a King." The figure chuckled distending an open palmed hand towards him.

"What will it be, young Harry? I can save us. Yet if you refuse, we will both die."

"How?" He croaked. "How did you get in here? In me? I didn't..."

"You held the cup, did you not?" Voldemort retorted quietly. "It was enough to form a connection...Imagine my surprise when I found you had a piece of me inside of you already. Weak, unsatisfying, but still there...and then your mind broke. In a broken mind there are no gates to hold at bay that which lurks in the darkness...and I grew from your insecurities. I laughed at your thirst for power, your ambition and your cunningness. I saw your potential and I would have guided you with ease...but alas I need a body now, and yours will do nicely." He added.

"Why now?" He narrowed his eyes. "Wait. What am I discussing this with you?" He gasped for air as his wand sparked. "You're getting out of here!"

"Do not bark brat." Voldemort snarled as his bone staff flew faster than Harry could see and clubbed him in the stomach. As the boy rolled on the ground clutching his stomach, Voldemort smirked and slowly walked towards him.

"I have been your teeth, your roar and your howling. You're no better than a starving puppy waiting to be kicked or put down." The man chuckled. "And this is the perfect moment. There is nothing here but choices that will lead me to power once more."

"No." Harry muttered. Chuckling to himself, the boy stood back up.

"Then we're going to die. I'll just have to wait until someone picks the cup again, or maybe until someone grabs the ring...or any other of my Horcruxes for what it matters."

"Hor...Horcruxes?" He whispered, "Are...are those what keeps you from dying?" He added.

"Now that would be telling." Voldemort shook his head. "And I'm no spy. Even though my other selves will eventually bow to me, I really need a..."

"You'd end up absorbed." Harry's eyes widened with the startling realization. He didn't know where that specific bit of knowledge came from, or if it came from the fact that he practically had Voldemort in his head, but now he understood. He understood why instead of keeping things subtle he had escalated them. "It's a game. You're playing a bloody game for supremacy. You kill one another and absorb him to be whole again."

Voldemort's eyes narrowed venomously.

"It appears I underestimated your Legilimency ability." The staff morphed into a wand. "This is enough talking." And then his hand weaved through spells so fast that Harry could barely blink as he jumped rolling on the ground, barely avoiding them as he hid behind the bark of a tree; a tree that wasn't there a second ago.

"You were lying before! You really do care if we die or not! I'm your only outlet ain't I? Without me you'd end up absorbed by the others!"

"I am King Voldemort!" The figure snarled. "I have you! This is all that I need to..."

"No." Harry laughed bitterly. "You've lost. You're just a sore loser." The teen shook his head as laughter filled the air. "A pathetic, sore loser who doesn't know when to admit defeat: who killed you, Dumbledore?"

An image flashed in Harry's mind and he couldn't help but smile.

"So you're losing yourself bit by bit! That's why...you can't risk getting absorbed by me, can you? Your knowledge would be in the hands of someone else. That would be extremely damaging, wouldn't it?" He chuckled as the tree he was hiding behind was uprooted. The massive oak, for it was an oak, suddenly dropped once more atop him. He barely managed to run away from where it would fall, and as he did that he saw the ground shake and split apart.

He gritted his teeth as he turned to stare at the now positively demonic-looking face of Voldemort.

"You think...You dare think me weaker than you?" The figure hissed.

"I don't think." Harry whispered. He locked eyes with Voldemort as he could feel the ground start to crumble beneath him. "I'm sure of it."

And Harry took a step forward.

"This is my mind." He hissed. "This is my soul." He snarled. "This is my body." He added. "This is me. Not you. Never you. This is me. I am Harry Dursley and I want you gone!" As he screamed that to the top of his lungs, he felt the surroundings bleed away, bit by bit as Voldemort or whatever it was that looked like him shrieked in pain. There was no other way to describe it as anything less than one of those pitiful screams that whales tend to give when they're about to die.

His eyes opened.

The ocean was nowhere in sight.

He blinked and jerked his head around in surprise.

"There the sins of the past shall be cleansed to all and the wicked present shall rise,

Those betrayed will have justice served, and their souls shall be purified,

But he who opens the gates shall not be granted leave...

For the darkness will claim his soul in eternal torment."

A voice crisply said. An open gate of alabaster and gold stood intertwined with mossy stones that seemed the color of emeralds. Above, behind, to his sides, the wailing sounds of dying whales echoed together with the rumbling of the ocean. On a stone stump, that once had been a really tall statue, stood an extremely old looking figure. A long white beard covered him from head to toe, and as he stood there Harry realized the strangeness of the man in question. A lance stuck through him, in a wound that should have meant to be fatal and yet apparently wasn't.

A bowl of water surrounded his face that should have made him drown and yet did not. He was apparently hanging from a thin thread from the stump of the statue, and with mad eyes he looked at him with something akin to a wicked gleam.

"Oh yes. Yes. Finally. Waited centuries. Waited more. Finally! Take it! Take the source of my torment! The payment has been paid! A soul. The soul has been paid. Take it from its nest, take it! Go inside! It waits you! Follow her sing. Follow and grasp her. Grab her. Be quick. Go." The man rambled as Harry looked at him with wide eyes.

"What is this place?" He finally managed to ask.

"Cantre'r Gwaelod the sunken region! It stands around you dead and drowned. These are the gates to Caer Wyddno, fortress of Gwyddno Garanhir and within here lies what I was robbed of. Here now I am, trapped forever, the thin thread keeps me alive by my powers. You who wear my ring grab what was stolen from me.

Please grab it and break my powers. I wish to die. I have lived long enough. I wish to die. I wish to die. Please. Take it!" The old wizard implored.

"But...who are you?" Harry finally found himself asking.

The old man stopped blabbering for a moment. His features morphed into a thoughtful gaze for a moment, before finally smiling and answering.

"My name came to be known as Myrddin Wyllt, but my mother, sweet Rowena, and my father, cunning Salazar, called me..."

Harry began to pale. It couldn't be. It just couldn't be possible...

"Merlin."

Apparently, the prophecy fulfilled was completely and utterly different from what anyone else had envisioned.

Harry couldn't help it.

He really, really couldn't help himself.

He began to laugh. He howled with laughter so hard he found himself coughing and wheezing out as he wiped away tears he didn't know he was shedding. This was just so frigging impossible he couldn't help but punch his own face and tear at his hair. This couldn't be...could it?

And yet, apparently...it was.

Author's notes

I am going to be a good lad and tell you this: I already foreshadowed the events of the books to come. And here I will present them to you (Of course they aren't in chronological order).

His dreams brought him to look at the lake of Hogwarts, and then at the depths of the Forbidden forest. They brought him into a dusty and filled with cobwebs crypt, filled with strange symbols of crosses and golden crucifixes, and then they flew him all the way to the depth bowels of the Kremlin, where among blood and howls of pains

monstrosities awaited their time. He was in the pretty castle of Versailles, walking through the hedgerows as the fires loomed upon the revolution that brought down a kingdom...the Bastilles stood menacingly in front of him, and yet he did not stop his dreams there.

He reached a hand for a strange staff of blackened thorns and alabaster, settled upon a cold stone throne that seemed to be giving way to a harsh rumbling ocean which held beneath its surface archways made of green mossy stones that yet shone like emeralds. (This is actually related to this particular book.)

Now since I've received praise for having a way to let everyone understand what's going on, I will now translate the prophecy as it actually is going through.

He who holds the three fortresses of darkness shall bring forth its spawns= It's pretty obvious. Harry had Azkaban. He then had Durmstrang in passing (Since he was directly responsible for having brought back the Inferi by giving the stone to Salazar) and he had Nurmengard. He did bring forth its spawns. Unwillingly maybe, but he did so.

The sons of a bloody past will obey the chosen of their lord= Nurmengard's inferi.

The betrayed will come to him who holds their kin as their own= The Dementors.

The drinkers of life shall rise to the call of the master of Snakes= The inferi/zombie of Durmstrang.

Together, they shall open the path to the sunken city= They fought all together in the spot where the Sunken city was meant to be, and through their repeated actions of bleeding, fighting, destroying, creating a damn maelstrom, they moved all around them until they got precisely above the sunken city (Cardigan bay, side of Wales)

There the sins of the past shall be cleansed to all and the wicked present shall rise= This is pretty obvious. The sins cleansed refers to Harry, Hermione, Lillian and even Hagrid getting pardon. The wicked present rising is because Salazar isn't the one who gets 'sacrificed' and thus that does bring rise to a wicked present, doesn't it?

Those betrayed will have justice served, and their souls shall be purified= again, this might refer Lillian and Co, but it also does refer to Harry, who had till then a piece of Horcrux within him. (Voldemort, really? Did you really have to do this to poor little Harry!?)

But he who opens the gates shall not be granted leave...

For the darkness will claim his soul in eternal torment= To open the gates of course you'd need a key. Said key being a soul. Said soul being a piece of Voldemort's.

Now, the Voldemort you are seeing IS the one killed by Gellert. Considering wraith-like Voldemort could go from Hogwarts to Albania with the speed of light, I think it safe to assume there is a 'FTL' (faster than light) connection between Point A and point B as long as both are Horcrux material.

Ahhh...and then there's Merlin. Of course.

Recapping what has 'apparently' happened.

A Broken-Minded Harry during first year (Under control of either Soul-shard Voldemort/ Bloody Baron / Helena Ravenclaw) apparently is responsible for having Imperiused his own parents away from him. This is strangely in tune with the appearant idea that Dumbledore has about Harry being some sort of pet project of Voldemort, meaning the Voldemort shard might have actually influenced him. Yet one can't discount the idea the Bloody Baron is involved. He did after all teleport Harry to Flamel to get a clock, didn't he? Then again Flamel is Godric Gryffindor. Meaning that the Bloody Baron would willingly go to him? Or maybe the Baron didn't know. Ah...the plot points and twists...and to think I began this story with the words 'It's going to be a simple story'.

...

The author apparently lies too in the notes. Nothing is safe! (Everything is permitted)

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 23

Fire and brimstone mixed with screams of the dying and the deceased. A small child screeched. The noise of galloping horses echoed in the distance. A shiver ran through his entire body as these distant echoes passed through him with every step he took within the massive fortress. Deep below the sea, whispers and murmurs in ancient Welsh echoed through the stones. Memories lingered and gave form to ghostly emanations that looked at him with curiosity and whispers of hope.

He walked on marble and stone floors, through endless hallways and wide courtyards. He walked guided by the soft tune of an old song. He walked through an ever rising crescendo of music. Violins came first. A piano joined later. Flutes mixed with drums as he heard trumpets sing. An orchestra was singing deep within this entrenched and accursed fortress, castaway in the depths of the sea. He heard her at last. The voice of a beautiful woman, that sang to him as step after step he walked closer to the throne room.

This thing felt familiar. Had he dreamed of it once? Had he dreamed of a cold throne deep within the sea? Shaken but alive he walked through. Prophecy intertwining with chance was not possible. All had to be planned, but from the beginning? Wooden doors gave way to his passage; their age visible by the way they creaked as they turned. His steps took him on richly adorned stairs covered in green, leaves sprouting vines that molded with the handrails at its sides.

He climbed slowly, feeling strangely clean and light. Every step brought his mind out of the fogs of worry as it melted off, like snow on a warm summer day. He heard the orchestra rise as he came upon golden doors that stood as tall and mighty as the ones of Hogwarts. Behind the double doors stood what he had been called for. His hands rested on both handles at the same time. A light tingly feeling rushed down his spine as he held onto the golden bars and pushed them down.

A light clack resounded in front of him. The music grew in crescendo, and as decisively as possible he pushed both doors away from him. The doors opened without a creaking sound, as if someone had oiled them precisely for that day. For the moment he would walk in.

A magnificent hall filled with gold coins, priceless paintings and golden artifacts stood in front of him. Polished jewels and magnificent gemstones lay in piles that made the entire room look like the cave of wonders of Aladdin.

Just like the cave, out of all the objects within the room only one seemed strangely different from the others. Sitting atop an alabaster throne, its roots deeply intertwined with the floor, stood a single gnarled staff-like looking plant. It looked like a sickly black vine covered in thorns, with some sort of stone handle that traversed its core. It gave off an eerie light, as the orchestra music faded to nothingness the more he walked closer to it. The moment he was in front of it, there was nothing but a deafening silence.

He slowly, hesitantly so because of the thick and dangerous looking thorns, moved his right hand towards the staff's handle. The thorns suddenly spiked as he screamed in pain and got down on one knee holding his right hand. Deep wounds where the thorns had pierced through his skin were now visible and bleeding. He hissed curses in pain, as he saw the staff suddenly snap and break apart. It tore itself as if it was but a living being stirring from a deep slumber. It broke and splintered together with the throne itself, opening up like a wicked flower.

At the center of the thorns and half hidden by the throne itself was a staff. The wood seemed to be slightly glittering as Harry tentatively brought his hand near it. The staff seemed to hum and buzz, as its shape and color began to change. It had been rumored that Merlin's wand was made of English oak.

The rumors had been wrong and yet right at the same time.

The staff wasn't made of English oak. The staff was made of multiple woods that seemed intertwined together seamlessly, and yet he couldn't help but feel there was something different as he touched them. He could feel his other wand start to slightly scorch, jealous probably of his attention to the staff of Merlin, in the palm of his hand. He didn't know where he came up with the idea that a wand could feel jealousy, but it wasn't probably that far-fetched if Ollivander once told him that all wands chose their owners, and not the opposite.

He stifled a moan of pain as the handle felt incredibly hot to the touch. He gritted his teeth as he grabbed and pulled the staff out of its base, lifting it up as if it was Excalibur herself. Somehow, he felt that it wasn't the fact that he was holding the staff of Merlin himself important, but the fact that he had been deemed worthy of wielding it. He, Harry Dursley, had the staff of Merlin in his hand.

He had Excalibur at his side and the staff of the most important Wizard of all times at his call. He wasn't feeling smug however. In truth, the image his brain conveyed was strangely bringing a small smile to his lips, as he recalled with fondness the scene of Gandalf fighting with sword and staff.

He had changed name and surname so many times, he was actually wondering if he could do so again. Maybe this time around he could be Gandalf Wylt? He chuckled as he shook his head. The next instant, the ground began to tremble. The piles of gold slowly rusted and decayed, forming molten pools of rotten corpses that howled their pain as the souls surrounding them screamed their despair. The orchestra that had quieted down returned with renewed intensity, but it was no longer something human to be heard.

It felt like an unholy wailing screech.

Water began to gush out from the walls and cracking golden windows of the hall, as the tiles themselves splintered apart as geysers of water erupted from the ground. Harry gulped down nervously, as he tightened his grip on his staff and his wand. Mentally, he smiled. His staff. Merlin's staff was now his.

Why, again, was he afraid?

Hermione Granger

She didn't have a broom.

She mentally listed to her mind to shrink and keep a broom at her side always. There was a reason myths about witches had them with a broom at their beck and call: they were damn useful to have nearby, especially when saving your crush from being splattered against the ocean's surface.

She didn't even have the decency to blush. Not that she cared much about decency any longer. The world was a tough place: you either survived or you didn't. All the bullshit about children being made to grow up happy was inexistent. Her thoughts of the system being right died when she was condemned innocent, and all her refusals on moral matters shriveled up the split second she was about to be used in a sacrificial ritual.

The world was out to get her, so wondering who was right or wrong made little sense. The most important thing was surviving. As the tidal wave came crashing down on the side of the ship, she instinctively grabbed onto the bulwark and grit her teeth. Her hands felt freezing cold as the wave washed over her, taking away her breath as the ship began to roll to the side.

She screamed as she felt her arm starting to lose hold around the bulwark, her fingers slipping as suddenly the boat righted itself again. The slamming down on the wooden deck took her breath away, as she coughed out salty water and winced from the pain she felt in her arm. She woozily looked back to where a moment ago Lillian had been, and she stared in shock. The girl wasn't there any longer: the wave had taken her out in the sea.

"Lillian!" Hermione screeched as she dashed on the other side of the boat, her right arm hanging loosely to her side. She slipped on the wooden deck and fell on her side as she skidded to the other side of the ship. She lifted herself up long enough to start frantically looking for the girl, only to be lost on what to do. The rain fell down heavily, and as she looked for any sign of her friend within the murky and bubbling waters, she couldn't help but feel a heavy blanket of guilt cover her. She shouldn't have dashed out like that.

She should have stayed indoors, so Lillian wouldn't have followed her. Now she was there, wallowing in self-guilt as she tried desperately to come up with any type of spell she knew of that could help her. She needed to catch Lillian. It was then that an idea bloomed in her mind.

"Accio Lillian's clothes!" She screamed as her wand stuck out. The Accio spell couldn't be used to grab people: but their clothes were fair game and thus if the laws of matter being solid held true...

Lillian's unresponsive body jumped out of the sea pulled by an invisible strength that seemed intentioned to tear her clothes apart in an effort to bring them to Hermione. The brown haired girl merely sighed in relief as she grabbed a hold on the girl, heavy with the water soaked clothes.

"Lillian?" Hermione whispered, shaking her friend. "Come on! You can't drown on me!" She yelled. She tried to recall what to do in these cases, but all she came up with was hit the girl on the chest. She didn't know if it was precisely what she had to do, but after a few strong punches in the girl's stomach, Lillian began to cough and stir.

"Her...Hermione?" Lillian gasped as she spluttered out her name. "I...Where's Harry?"

Hermione closed her eyes, before shuddering from the cold and turning to look beyond the bulwark, to the sea that was bubbling once more.

"I...I don't know. He...He's going to be all right." She added.

"I'm a bit sleepy." Lillian whispered. "So tired."

"You're heavy, Lillian." Hermione snapped back. "Try and stay awake: better to get out of here before we get another wave like that." She slowly stood up, gritting her teeth as her unresponsive hand brushed against Lillian's side. She firmly held her feet planted against the deck, mentally cursing as she opened the first door she came across and threw herself and Lillian inside.

The cabin was nothing more than a supply depot with used nets and wide tubs that seemed filled with dried fishes. For some reason, even though the rest of the boat seemed to be rolling to the right and to the left, the fish didn't seem to feel the pull of gravity. There probably was some sort of magic on the tubs to keep them in. Maybe there was a sticky charm of sorts or some type of 'refuse the laws of physics' attached to it.

She didn't actually care much about it. Her arm hurt and she felt dead tired...and yet she just couldn't stay there. Slowly, agonizingly but steadfastly she rose to her feet once more and headed stubbornly for the door.

"Hermione?" Lillian mumbled, the girl already falling asleep quickly.

"I...I have to go." She whispered. "I...I need to make sure Harry's safe." She muttered, silently pleading the girl would fall asleep. She might have said that to Lillian, but deep down Hermione knew it was another reason that made her brave the cold and harsh storm and the moody sea again: she couldn't be useless. Not when Harry could still be saved if she worked fast enough.

So she opened the door and stared at what stood on the side of the ship, slithering its way through the ocean water.

Only one thought came to Hermione's mind as the girl closed the door back in utter shock.

Jormungandr was real.

And it was thoroughly pissed off.

Salazar Slytherin

Magic met magic. It might have seemed an utterly simple way of describing it, but it was the most accurate way. Rain became cold ice daggers that flew in the air, blocked by shields conjured from thin nothingness. Ancient curses from the depths of secret Alexandrian libraries met their dreaded enemies in the counter curses of the Assyrians. The battle spells of the ancient Greeks fell to the might of the Roman's defensive might, and as the Russian dark curses were uttered with foul words, the American's Aztec chants rose to grasp control of the battle.

The water bubbled around them and turned from vapor to dust, from dust to sand, from sand to glass and from glass to shards of steel all in the blink of an eye. Just as fast as a spell was cast so too was the counter curse applied. Just as fast as a weapon met another, so were they both tore apart and discarded. Godric Gryffindor held on his side of the field a weapon of ancient goblin silver, capable of absorbing all that could strengthen it. He on the other hand wielded parseltongue and the old Indian spells that the other founder would never be able to master.

One such spell had just then finished summoning a sea snake to do his bidding. A Serpensortia of epic magnitudes that nearly conjured a snake as mighty as Jormungandr himself. Salazar didn't bother with anything less, and neither did Godric, for as his sword clashed against a transfigured mallet, his wand brought forth fierce Fiendfyre.

The fire from the pits of hell itself burned with no regards everything, and even the rain was set on fire in a spectacle of absolute dread for all who knew just how dangerous it was. A single spark of Fiendfyre could burn down the entire Amazonian forest within a split second...because it could not be quenched by anything but magic. They were at sea, and yet the fire still burned as it touched the surface of the ocean. The giant snake he had summoned flew in the air, emerging from the depths of the water like a titan of old.

Its fangs spit out clouds of mortal venom, to poison the skies, and as its mouth closed against Godric's body, the snake looked positively smug. It was but a moment. The next, Godric's sword cut free through the snake's entire body, emerging from his stomach and flying down as it disemboweled the snake while deftly avoiding the wickedest curses that Salazar had at his disposal.

"You think you can stop me, Godric!?" He yelled at the man that once had been his friend.

"I can try!" Godric roared back, as fire suddenly flew through the body of the giant snake, its eyes morphing into deep crimson pools of flame.

"I wonder if the world knows how quick you can call forth Inferis!" Salazar exclaimed, twirling his own wand above his head and spinning it furiously. Electricity answered his call, crackling as it formed a sphere of pure lightning bolts. It unleashed then from the tip of his wand, piercing through the entire body of the snake and tearing apart enormous chunks of flesh.

Its charred remains fell with a heavy weight against the surface of the ocean, crashing down as the body sunk deep beneath the sea.

"Always the goody two shoes, huh Godric!? Yet you had no trouble using Amortentia for your plans!" Salazar snorted as another thunder fell down where seconds before Godric had been.

"I can't hear you!" Godric yelled back, his sword flaming with wicked dark flames as he flew all the way back up, his body a dark mist. Salazar narrowed his eyes, his wand slowly transfiguring the water in yet another ice sword. Holding it tightly, he whispered an old Inuit chant.

Permafrost and ice began to ooze out of the sword, as the strength of the bitter winds of the Arctic merged with it. He made it look like a child's play, when it had taken him years to master this. Still, it did not matter in the long run. He had already won. He just had to make Godric realize it too.

The swords clashed and met in midair, and yet as Salazar's began to crack the cold spread through the silver all the way to Godric's hand. Their other hands were busy throwing and dispelling spells, and at such a close range it was a mere battle of will and intent mixed with silent spell casting.

"You...can't....win." Godric hissed. "You can't...the world isn't...ready."

"Ready?" Salazar snorted. "I don't care about ready or not."

"It was...a mistake." The founder of Gryffindor pleaded. "Please, Salazar."

"No." The other man whispered, "You were around for centuries, Godric. Why should I care about you now?"

"You know what we..." Godric suddenly coughed a spray of blood, and in that mere instant the battle was decided. With his unresponsive freezing hand there was simply no way for the man to parry the wandlessly transfigured daggers that rose from the billowing mist that surrounded Salazar's sword. As one of said daggers neatly cut the founder's wand hand, the last mixture of screams and gurgles erupting from Godric's mouth were pleads.

"Please...NO...You don't...under...stand..."

"I understand all too well, Godric." He hissed back, tightening the grip on his sword. "We chained it together, didn't we? Well, go and meet him now. May you forever rot in hell, while I rise above and beyond the coil of mortal men..." He chuckled grimly as light faded

from Godric's eyes. The splintered soul of the man suddenly lurched and screeched as it was recalled to where it was meant to go. The wicked and cold eyes of death bore into Salazar's skull for but a moment, but the man merely shrugged it off.

"Rest now." He murmured to the body of his friend that like a lump of flesh fell backwards, crashing against the sea. "Sleep the dreamless sleep of the dead." He grinned, "Your body will rot and fester, and your soul shall live in eternal torment." He laughed out loud. "I will never join you in the afterlife."

Just then, Salazar Slytherin turned to leave.

He didn't even wince as the sword of Gryffindor pierced him from behind. He didn't even cry as he felt the brutal fire of Fiendfyre burn through his internal organs. He just laughed, harshly and madly, as with all the strength he had he banished his wand towards the nearest ship.

"Fine then, Godric...I'll be back." And in a torrent of cinders and flames, Salazar's body burned up in its entirety.

Gellert Grindelwald

The room was particularly peculiar in its own way. It looked like a titanic ensemble of ancient and old collection of monuments, all piled up and yet at the same time placed with great care all around the humongous area. He had to blink at the sight of the Colossus of Rhodes peering down on him from high above, his glowing eyes casting the light that shone like a twin sun.

This wasn't as much a room as it was an utterly complicated ensemble of various artworks, lost in the midst of the ages. There was a statue of Zeus, seated on his throne. The Athena Parthenos, the Lemnian Athena, the Aphrodite of Knidos, for once Gellert was glad he had studied the classical arts, for he was walking surrounded by the ancient and lost treasures that the world had given up on finding ever again. Destroyed works of art stood unscathed and neatly cared for by the magic that permeated the atmosphere. Old art mixed with recently new ones, and thus A Vision of the Last Judgment by William Blake stood near the torn away piece of the Bayeux Tapestry.

The Painter on his Way to Work by Van Gogh was dropped against an old mosaic that looked to be at the very least of the fifth century. Some of the things placed in this strange place were far older than even him, and yet many more stood out. He hesitated.

Gellert Grindelwald was not a fool. There were things to do, when one neared magical events of such magnitude. Magic wasn't always safe, and if there stood magic capable of stealing the Colossus of Rhodes and preserving it, then he dared not see what it could actually do when the wards of said place flared to life. Every magic had conditions to work, and reasons to be able to maintain its powers: nothing could be done 'like that' that would last through the eons without a remarkable reason.

He glimpsed at a few statues that seemed Greek in origin, and then shuddered at the sight of an enormous tower that reached even higher than the Colossus itself.

The tower of Babylonia, built to reach god himself lost itself far over the sky and beyond sight.

That wasn't normal. This wasn't normal. He shuddered. For all of his might and power he too had limits. Clear-cut defined limits that could not be infringed. This? This was one of said limits: never try anything unless you are sure of what you are doing. This was clearly something else, something he knew not of and whatever it was...he dared not take one more single step forward.

So he took a step back. Gellert would rather be deemed a coward than a new Icarus. He'd rather run than stay and stare at whatever hellish requirement was needed to trudge closer to the tower that had condemned an entire race. So he walked back. He walked back until he lost himself in the maze of old objects and priceless artifacts that came from times even more ancient than time itself. Egyptians didn't even cut it: some things were clearly belonging to the Neanderthal period...and yet he wondered how all this came to be at the school.

He wondered, but he dared not ask.

He tried to apparated, after coming to terms with the fact that there was no exit reachable. Obviously he failed.

He tried to break the floor with magic.

It failed.

He tried to fly.

It failed again.

He tried to use a portkey.

It failed once more.

He finally, desperately, tried to use Fiendfyre on one of the sculptures nearby...and nothing happened.

The man dropped on his knees and openly wept. There was no way out. There was no way through but apparently climbing through the tower. He had no choice in the end.

Gellert took a deep breath, before steadying himself back on his feet. Quietly, in the eerie silence of the room filled with ancient treasures lost in time, Grindelwald began to walk. An archway of rock surrounded by dark trees barred his path, deeply entrenched between a mixture of garbage and tapestries older than he could place them. Like a sort of maze, the piles at his sides grew to surround him, forcing him to go forward or back, but not granting him leeway to avoid passing through the arch.

Written in shining letters of crimson red stood words he had once heard, a long, long time before.

"Per me si va ne la città dolente, per me si va ne l'eterno dolore, per me si va tra la perduta gente. Giustizia mosse il mio alto fattore; fecemi la divina podestate, la somma sapienza e 'l primo amore. Dinanzi a me non fuor cose create se non etterne, e io eterno duro. Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'intrate."

"Through me the way to the suffering city; Through me the everlasting pain; Through me the way that runs among the Lost. Justice urged on my exalted Creator: Divine Power made me, The

Supreme Wisdom and the Primal Love. Nothing was made before me but eternal things And I endure eternally. Abandon all hope - You Who Enter Here."

He shivered as he read and translated the words that granted access to hell itself. He gasped in pain as he felt his wand hand burn brightly, marring his skin as he took a step forward, through the arch itself.

The line of the Deathly Hallows marked his skin.

"He...He who masters all...shall be master of Death itself." Gellert whispered as the scene beyond the archway twisted and morphed, displaying a rotting ensemble of flesh and vicious insects and vermin that seemed to feast upon the fleshy floor.

"Through hell then, must I march?" His shoulders trembled up and down, as he could hear the incoming screams of what seemed like specters and wraiths.

"Then so be it!" And thus with a deafening scream, the elder wand clearly in hand, Gellert ran forward.

Harry Dursley

Sand was in his mouth. He came to his senses with his body laid on a beach, covered in sand of which he had apparently eaten a mouthful if his teeth's crunching was of any indication. He gagged and retched sea water mixed with sand, as his hands clutched strongly onto Merlin's staff and his own wand. Wobbling, he slowly groaned to himself as he stood up.

Sand was on his Durmstrang clothes and on his hair. He breathed in slowly the cold December air. He grimly chuckled as he looked around. The beach was practically deserted. There was no-one and nothing around him for miles. It was just that: a beach. A normal looking beach in a cold December morning, and he was freezing. His clothes were soaked with the sea water, and he could feel his skin blistering from the salt.

He placed his wand back in his pocket, clenching and opening his hand as he looked around. Merlin's staff hummed gently around him, and as he closed his eyes he shuddered. He opened them again as

he looked around once more. There was something being brought closer by the water. He turned to stare at the ocean, now far calmer than the day before, and of a beautiful greyish color as the overhanging clouds up in the sky. He looked at the horizon, where the sea met the sky, and he sighed.

The object being brought closer soon touched the sand of the beach, and as Harry moved closer to grasp at it, he opened his eyes in surprise. The Invisibility cloak had drifted ashore, right in front of him. He carefully grabbed it, and as quickly as possible hid it beneath his invisible cloak. He shook his head strongly and slapped his cheeks. He knew this wasn't normal, per se, but he also knew better than to ask: he had chosen, now was the time to reap what he had sown.

"From now on, I'll stay the hell away from the sea." He muttered. He finally took a deep breath, before making a sharp whistle in the air.

In a shower of flames and sparks, Sophie appeared screaming in the midair, her plumage burning brightly as she landed on his shoulder.

"Hey there." He whispered softly to the bird. "I'm a hypocrite aren't I?"

The phoenix merely chirped. She nuzzled her beak against his cheek, before singing merrily.

"No need to rub it in." He sulkily added. "It's not like I've got a clear cut path ahead of me now, do I?"

Sophie merely shrugged with her feathers, before starting to sort of bark as a small owl flew down from the air to land at Harry's feet. He raised a curious eyebrow, as Machiavelli suddenly hooted, before flapping its wings and landing on his other shoulder.

"What are you doing here, Machiavelli?" He asked hesitantly, looking at the hybridized poultry with a mixture of curiosity and wonder.

Two soft pops of apparition happened a few seconds later, and Harry's blood froze within his very veins. James Potter and Albus Dumbledore appeared from thin air. He mentally cursed as he

averted his eyes to stare at Sophie, who merely thrilled as it looked with her dark eyes towards Dumbledore.

The old man appeared, for a moment, wounded. He recovered quickly however, and had Harry not being on the look-out for any possible sign of hostility, he would have missed it. James Potter on the other hand was incredibly anxious.

"H...Harry?" He hesitated. "You're all right? You're not wounded, right?" His father took a step forward, but in answer to that he took one backwards, lowering his staff in front of the two wizards.

"I've been pardoned by the ministry," he commented. "You know that, right?"

James flinched, before nodding. Dumbledore smiled a sort of happy grin.

"Indeed my boy. Your actions are a wondrous tale already! Your concern for the well-being of the others, your selfless act of sacrifice in battling Salazar himself! And what is this? Has a phoenix chosen you too? My! This is a tale of wonder truly!" The old wizard literally gushed with amusement and a twinkle in his eyes. He clutched his staff, his, not Merlin's any longer, and gritted his teeth as he smiled back.

What did he have, after all, against the man?

Nothing but words and actions he could not prove.

"I am ashamed, truly ashamed to admit I was wrong with you...I should have known of Gellert," Harry's blood ran cold at those words, "But he is done for, truly disposed of. Voldemort too has followed..." He winced. What was the old wizard talking of?

"Both destroyed one another, there is nothing left..." He continued, but Harry wasn't listening.

It actually hurt.

He actually hurt from knowing that Gellert was no longer there.

He hadn't thought he would: Gellert had been a psychopathic monster who had used Fluffy, forcing him to kill the poor beast in order to reach the stone. Yet he felt sad for Gellert's death meant Basileus' death. And hadn't the Ravenclaw prefect been a friend, at the very least? Hadn't he and the others...

"How is Hogwarts, sir?" He found himself asking cautiously. "Is...Is everyone all right?"

The twinkle of amusement in Dumbledore's eyes shone brightly. It was then, with the following words, that Harry understood what truly made him terrified of the old wizard: he could smile and make his eyes twinkle even when he spoke of death and murders done in cold blood.

"Indeed. Although some of the students followed Grindelwald and fought to the death. Quite a sad tale it was: Miss Clearwater and Mr. Goyle both died defending the man, but not before I managed to catch up and convince the others to lay down their wands. Alastor Moody had no patience unfortunately, but he will be discharged from active service after all: too old! Yet now Hogwarts is perfectly safe and..."

He toned out the rest of Albus' words. They were cheerful words. They were happy words. They were normal and worry-free words that spoke of easy and cheesy things...and yet there was nothing happy about it. There was nothing happy in knowing that Miss Clearwater, her name was Penelope wasn't it? And that Goyle, he was one of Draco's friends wasn't him? Had both died...

And if Harry could hazard a guess; if he truly could make a bet on how things had gone...then Dumbledore himself was probably responsible for both their deaths.

Yet the man smiled...and he couldn't help but nervously nod.

"Order of Merlin first class! So young and yet so brave!" Dumbledore gushed once more, "This year has been quite chaotic, hasn't it?" The Headmaster soon added carefully, "I have closed down the school for an early Christmas vacation too. In order for everyone to rest and recuperate, I also have suspended any homework assignments. Now, you are awaited the day after tomorrow to the ministry. Your pardon has already gone underway just like that of

your sister, Miss Granger and poor Hagrid who is still missing. I'm sure he'll show up eventually." Something buzzed within the Headmaster's pocket, and as the old wizard took out a pocket watch, one that nearly made Harry recoil in shock, it added with a sorrowful face. "I'm sorry James, seems I'm needed at the ministry. It's in chaos as of right now. We will speak later, maybe tomorrow?"

"Dinner? I think Harry will need time to settle in."

Settle in?

Him?

Where?

They weren't...

"Of course. I am glad I managed to convince Cornelius to see reason." Albus beamed a smile at him, one that made him shiver. "The poor lad is freezing stiff, James. Bring him home before he freezes to death."

Harry widened his eyes, as James nodded and waved goodbye to Headmaster, who disappeared with a soft pop. Sophie silently trembled with her shoulders, but said or cried nothing.

His eyes remained wide, as he was grabbed by his...father...and...brought...home.

Potter mansion.

He had, apparently, been brought 'home'.

Author's notes

And the climax of the story has been reached and passed. Hurray!

Godric merely charmed his sword to be attracted to Salazar's back, showing a level of cunningness even Salazar himself hadn't thought of during the battle. Now, a lot of things 'might' appear strange.

Of course they are, since there are now more questions going around after having solved some in the previous 'arc'. (Who was the voice? Nicholas Flamel-Godric Gryffindor)

Now to recap...we have now more pieces of the puzzle. (Do notice that being a classical student, I've got an extensive background of ancient myths to pull out from the world, give them a 'magic' twist, and pour them in.) We have the Babylonian tower, the Hell of Dante Alighieri (Does the tower act like a purgatory?) We have the Elder Wand in the hands of a lost Gellert, the invisibility cloak following Harry around like a lost puppy and the ring of resurrection apparently 'lost' in the aftermath...maybe. (yeah right) We have two more students' deaths. We have the still disappeared Hagrid.

The mechanisms of the clock have furiously ticked for a while, and now it's the time to rest and let the events distend themselves. Will normality ever be possible?

Snort please, we're talking about Harry here.

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 24

Potter mansion was an old Victorian style house. It had probably been redone a number of times, because some old elements of Gothic architecture still remained to be seen in the sort of wicked gargoyles' statues that stood perched on the rooftops. The moment he apparated with Sophie and Machiavelli on his shoulders, he slightly flinched at the sensation. Teleport wasn't usually considered that worrisome in dungeons and dragons, why did it have to be different for these kinds of wizards? Sophie's on the other side was actually smoother and easier to 'suffer through'.

They had appeared midway onto a cobblestone path that seemed to snake its way towards a big pair of doors that was probably the main entrance to the mansion. There wasn't grass in the front of the house, but rather there were a few hoops to simulate a Quidditch pitch. Harry's eyes caught a flying form that was strangely trying her best to off herself off, considering some of the twists and tight turns she was making. Passing through the small circles that were the hoops was just another form of madness his sister seemed to enjoy, apparently.

"Quidditch pitch got in since Lillian's been five." James muttered, seeing him stare at it. "Well, Lily's nearly tore me apart when she saw it. Moved all the flowers to the back garden without telling her...Never do that to a woman, son."

Harry shuddered, but let the 'son' pass through him. It was no use getting mad in this situation, and frankly, he was too dead tired to even think straight any longer. He felt as if he was in a sort of drunken stupor, and he supposed that if it weren't for Sophie's warmth coming from his shoulder, he would have fallen asleep already. He saw the tiny blurred figure suddenly growing larger, as Lillian had probably spotted them.

The girl looked positively torn. On one side she was apparently anxious to talk to him, considering how she quickly jumped down from her broom and nearly fell face first on the ground. On the other she stilled hesitantly a few meters away from him, unsure.

"Harry? You're...here? To...to stay?" She asked, whispering with a creaky voice.

He sighed and nodded, showing a sort of hesitant smile. "It appears so."

Lillian squealed a moment later. It was the most girlish thing he had seen her do, as the girl tackled him and hugged him tightly, taking away the air from his lungs as she did so. Machiavelli and Sophie both flew away from his shoulders at that moment, taking to the air and circling around the mansion, probably heading to wherever Owls went to sleep within the Potter's house.

"You're here! You're finally here! I've got to show you around, there's a library since you're a Ravenclaw, and we can do homework together and there's the Quidditch pitch where you can try and..."

It stung. He did feel the warmth of such statements and the face that his sister had hugged him in such a delighted way was clearly something he enjoyed, but at the same time...it stung. This didn't seem like something meant for him. This was something for a Harry Potter. A nice bloke, Harry Potter had to be. He was a smart Ravenclaw, all smiles and happiness, no troubles on the horizon and nobody out there to skin him.

Not Harry Dursley, the guy who had a brief, mad chat with Merlin himself, grabbed his staff, tore apart an ancient sunken city and escaped the clutches of Voldemort, Salazar and whatever else had it in for him...without considering the fact that Dumbledore was still at large and apparently he was now deeply entrenched into the enemy territories. He kind of wondered if there was a Voldemort who was saner than the others, and if there was, then what he needed to be recruited to get the hell out of there.

He awkwardly removed himself from Lillian's hug, just as James, probably catching up on him being uncomfortable, commented.

"Lillian, let the poor boy breath! We found him washed ashore on the beach: he's probably tired and hungry, aren't you?" The man asked him, and he found himself nodding back. Lillian bore a sheepish smile as she looked downwards.

"Thanks." She muttered, in such a low tone that he had trouble catching it, "I'll go get mom; she was fretting in the kitchen since this morning waiting for your return!" Lillian dashed off, slightly red from the heat probably. He raised an eyebrow but said nothing as he walked at a more sedated pace towards the door, following behind James.

"You'd like to play Quidditch this afternoon?" The man asked.

"I'm...I'm not a Quidditch player." He replied hesitantly. It was probably a wrong thing to say, because the look on James' face was practically drooping. The man then smiled awkwardly.

"Well, you take after your mother then."

"Ah...if you say so." It wasn't difficult for him to understand that he simply had no idea how to act with his 'parents'. He couldn't just wake up and call them 'mom' and 'dad' and he refused to forget about the Dursley...even though they called him...no. They didn't. It was just a modified memory.

Somebody had modified his memory during first year, and he knew the answer to that question already. It actually made kind of sense for him to be accepting of 'his new family': his old one was considered evil, wasn't it? If it was...then Dumbledore was actually going to come around to check on him.

He tightened the grip on his staff. He couldn't just come out with being the wielder of Merlin's ring and Merlin's staff now, could he? He just sincerely hoped Hogwarts wouldn't start screaming stuff about him being the chosen of Merlin or something like that...he doubted he'd escape unscathed from it.

The doors of the mansion opened without a creaking sound, their hinges well-oiled as they smoothly rotated on place. In the entrance hall the figure of a lip-biting Lily was visible, wearing a white apron above muggle clothes, sort of like the same that his mother Petunia used to wear when cooking. A sweater with both sleeves turned backwards in order not to end up dipped in the sauces, and a pair of trousers.

The moment he stepped him he was hugged tightly by Lily herself, and he couldn't help but slowly close his eyes. It was different from

being tackled by Lillian. His sister had been wearing the Quidditch protection clothes, and as such she felt a bit...well, 'pointy' to say the least. His 'mother' was soft and warm. It was a nice embrace. The tears that dwelled in his eyes weren't because of the hug he was receiving, but because of the memories of those he had been given by Petunia. He didn't even realize his breathing had begun to hitch until he heard Lily soothe him.

"It's all right Harry, it's all right." She whispered motherly to him. "You're safe now. You can cry."

"N...I..." He began to sob and cry as he found himself hugging back the woman. He wasn't crying of joy because he was 'home'. He was crying in anger, fright, frustration, because he knew he was betraying his real parents, he knew he was being forced to just let go of everything he had done till then and then...because it was, somehow, over. There was no Salazar. There was no Gellert. Voldemort had been banished from his mind. There was only him and his...family.

And he was afraid, afraid he'd let them in. Afraid he'd accept them and then have them taken away. Afraid everything he had done to toughen up, to become who he was right there and then would slip out of his fingers. Afraid he'd become weak, too weak to fight his enemies. He was afraid to believe in a future that wasn't dark and filled with bloodshed. He was afraid...and he cried because even if Lily Potter wasn't the woman he wished to call mother...she at least came close to it enough to let her see him cry.

He slowly stopped crying, and as he rubbed with his right hand his probably red and puffy eyes, he couldn't help but notice that Lily's too were strangely moist, just like James. In their eyes, had he wept of joy for being back to a true home, away from abusiveness and the likes? Was this what they believed? He was just so tired of being against everything and everyone he couldn't come out with any words to make them understand.

He was tired. Truly, his entire body felt like an unresponsive lump of weight and a blanket of tiredness. He had barely removed himself from his mother's hug when his eyes settled on the stairway at the end of the entrance hall. Hermione was standing there unsurprisingly embarrassed, especially after having seen him cry

and be...weak. He had been so damn weak in crying in that moment, but he just couldn't help but feel a bit brattish: he was so tired for Merlin's beard...he just wished for a bed. He'd even take the floor any moment then.

He was glad for the staff: it nicely held his weight and seemingly morphed its handle to better suit his grip. He gave an awkward smile to Hermione, before he heard his father's voice speak carefully.

"Well...want to see your room?"

He meekly nodded back, and as he departed from his mother's side he felt her hand rest for a moment on his hair, momentarily moving through his locks, as if absentmindedly making double sure he was real. He couldn't help but slightly wince at the feeling that he was playing along the woman. She clearly did think of him as her son. The problem was that the opposite wasn't actually true.

He walked past Hermione with a flustered face, giving the girl an acknowledging and meek nod before continuing his following of his 'father'. He could suspect the girl had been living together with the Potters, especially after the ordeal that had forced her to see her parents being obliviated by the ministry officials. The room he ended up in was spacious. It did kind of look as big as the four beds room of the Ravenclaw dormitories, and since it only held one bed it was an indication of what else was within as furniture.

A wide desk, the type his father used to have in his office at Grunnings, stood on the side next to a really old dresser and drawer that looked every bit as costly as old as they were respectable. A small shelf, with a wide variety of books, stood within the wall that held blue and bronze colors. He raised an eyebrow at the strange display of his school stuff, the one from Durmstrang, standing in front of his bed.

"Oh. Right." James commented warily, "A couple of Dementors delivered your stuff to the ministry, and Dumbledore brought it to us...Durmstrang, huh?" He asked carefully.

"Uh-uh." He whispered back. "I think they'll expel me for sure from there." He chuckled. "I destroyed the school after all...they earned it...blood rituals..." and then he literally fell on the bed, not even hearing whatever else his 'father' was saying. He was just too tired

to even make a remark of sorts or try and stay awake any longer...and the bed was comfortable.

The moment his eyes opened, he realized he was being seen by a brown gaze. Hermione was actually sitting on the chair near his bed, holding onto a book that read 'Jane Eyre'. He didn't know if the girl was actually reading the book, or just holding it to shield her face away at the right moment, but what he did know was that he had caught her stealing a peek at him.

She slightly reddened, as she dropped the book on the bed desk and squeaked out loud.

"You're awake!"

He flinched at the high pitched squeal and sighed, as he slowly stood up. He gritted his teeth at the feeling of his sore muscles and bones. "What hit me?"

"Exhaustion." Hermione blurted out quickly. "Magical and physical. I kept an eye out on your stuff, couldn't trust them not to bring it to Dumbledore so I nicked it beforehand. You slept for all the morning and half of the afternoon. That reminds me: Tisky!"

Harry's eyes widened as a small green creature with wide eyes, a house elf...no, a house Goblin, appeared out of thin air.

"Mistress Lillian's friend Hermione called? How can Tisky be of assistance?" The goblin squeaked. Her wide eyes turned to stare at Harry for a moment, and she literally squealed in delight. "Master Harry is awake! Mistress Lily will want to know immediately!"

"Yes. Tisky, could you get some food for Harry while you're at it?" Hermione asked the elf, who smiled and nodded before disappearing once more.

As soon as the elf had gone away, Hermione turned to Harry.

"I told them nothing." She began hesitantly, "Well...just that you came and saved me from Azkaban and somehow you were the heir of the fortress...Had to tell them something because they wanted to know why the Dementors seem so keen on wanting to talk with you and obey you like puppies." She muttered, "And I said I knew

nothing of Gellert or Voldemort. Only that you came around to save me and that you worked alone. You should read the Prophet: they've got an entire column dedicated to the 'brother of the girl who lived and his fantastic adventures'. It's as if they expect you to be Merlin's reborn for Merlin's beard." She hissed rolling her eyes.

Harry took a deep breath. "Where're the sword and the staff?"

"I've got them in my room." Hermione replied calmly. "Aren't you worried about what they're going to ask?"

"Why would I?" He smiled at her, "I'm just going to wing it as usual."

"Shouldn't you be in Gryffindor with all that bravery?" She asked him.

"And shouldn't you be in Ravenclaw for all your smartness?" He retorted with a wink. He closed his eyes for a moment, before opening them again and paling slightly. "Hermione." He commented. "Where are my glasses?"

"On the bed desk, why?" She asked curiously. Of course she had to ask, because she couldn't understand. He was seeing all around him. He was seeing without the glasses. He was no longer forced to wear them and...and it actually scared him slightly. Just what, in the name of Merlin itself, could make something like this happen overnight? Was it the reason he had been so dead tired? He didn't know about that, but he knew better than to stay and ponder on it. He slowly tried to get out of bed, but Hermione's hand shot out quickly and held him down by the shoulders.

"No getting up!" Hermione snapped at him, "Seriously: you need rest Harry. Do I have to chain you down?"

He groaned and rolled his eyes. "I doubt you'd be able to."

"Try me." She replied coquettishly.

"Did you just grow a spine, Granger?" He found himself smirking.

"With all that happened? I'm..." She bit her lower lip, "It's just that..."

"Out with it." Harry sighed. "Want to share horror stories?"

She giggled shaking her head. "No. I've had enough of them. How about something with a happy ending?"

"Horror stories teach a far more important moral than happy ending tales." He retorted calmly, his eyes looking at the doorway. "That all horror begins with Hubris, and ends in violence and blood. If people had respected the laws, then no Horror story would have really happened. True horror, however..." He whispered, "Is the one that comes unwarranted. That cannot be stopped."

She uneasily placed her hands on her lap, her eyes downcast as she reflected over his words. "What about the ones ending with a happy ending?"

"And what of the victims in between? Were they any less worthy of life than the protagonists?" He replied with a small smile. "You know, I think there's someone eavesdropping on us at the door." Hermione blinked before looking towards the door too. It spun open quietly, as a slightly flustered Lily Potter entered with a tray.

"Well, you caught me." The woman smiled as she deposited the tray on the bed. There were toasts and scrambled eggs mixed with scones and tea. "You should eat what you can, Harry." She added while moving a hand to try and get his hair under control, biting her lip for a moment as she relented. "Just like your father: your hair won't obey no matter what is done to it."

"Oh...I didn't know that." He whispered back. His gaze fixed on the silverware, as he slowly grabbed with his right hand the fork. He stilled, frozen for a moment. "Who changed me?" He finally asked. He couldn't have...they couldn't have...

"Your father did." Lily chuckled as she said that, "He used a wand though, a swapping spell and it was done: no need to feel embarrassed."

Harry breathed out in respite. "My wand?"

"It wasn't on you...Hermione's keeping your stuff in her room." Lily smiled with a sort of teasing grin, "Your girlfriend is very protective of you, you know?"

He blinked.

Hermione...Girlfriend?

He turned his gaze to the girl, who was actually turning red. That was normally impossible. Turning any and all shades of red was completely out of reason and law of nature. You could turn red if you had a high degree fever, or if you were screaming out loud for long...but red from embarrassment? She did kind of look like she had just eaten a frog though. The flustered mix of embarrassment and anxiousness were actually kind of easy to see.

"She isn't...I am not...we're not..." He muttered before biting down on his tongue and controlling himself long enough to choke out. "We're not an item."

"Oh. Pity." Lily wistfully said with her teasing smirk still on. Her gaze went to Hermione for a moment, her smile softening up in something akin to comforting. "Don't worry dear. Boys are like that: they take a bit more to grow up." She then turned to leave, but not before saying in the end. "Dinner's in a couple of hours...I'll leave you two to sort things out."

And then, just then, she left closing the door behind her.

"Lily likes to tease a lot." Hermione finally blurted out. "And well, I don't actually think we'd be a great couple right? I end up losing myself in books and am not actually a nice person to be around most of the time," her voice lowered to a small timbre, "I'm a bookworm and my charms are the same as those of a hag, really...I'll probably end up with a small house and a swarm of Kneazles for all I..."

Harry began to eat, letting Hermione babble excuses and reasoning of various form and types. He knew better than to interrupt her, and he had just barely finished eating that the door swung open again to reveal his sister, wearing a more comfortable jersey of the Chudley Cannons of all things and a knee-length skirt.

"And...Oh, Lillian!" Hermione smiled nervously towards his sister, who smiled at the two of them and sat down on the side of the bed, nipping a scone that had been left uneaten. "Really." Hermione scowled, "You're going to get fat if you keep on eating outside of meals."

"I exercise daily Hermione!" Lillian rebuffed her, "I'm not fat! Right, Harry?" She asked him, with a sort of pleading gaze as if she expected him to take her side.

"Pleasantly plump." He replied calmly, with the utmost serious voice he could muster without laughing. Lillian blinked for a moment, before finally connecting what he had said and slowly but surely narrowing her eyes.

"Plump?"

"Pleasantly so." Harry nodded, grabbing the empty tea cup and lifting his pinky finger out. "Absolutely pleasant."

Lillian stuttered, her hands slowly clenching and opening, as she mimicked going after his neck. She finally groaned and lifted her hands in the air as if to give up, before turning her gaze to Hermione with a sad pout.

"Hermione...he's being mean!" She whimpered.

"Oh come on." Hermione repressed a giggle, badly so, "I'm sure he doesn't mean it."

Lillian stood quiet for a moment, before her hazel eyes settled on his once more and inadvertently he winced as she looked at him. A small hesitant voice came out from his sister's throat, as a question that apparently had been lodged there found its way out.

"Harry..." She began slowly, "I...I trained in Occlumency like you asked, I got help and...can you tell me now, please?"

He blinked, before realizing what the girl was saying and nodding.

"Do you have the map?" He asked her.

"No." She admitted, "I lost it at school." Her eyes went down as she bit her lip, "But please trust me: I didn't say a word to anyone."

Harry merely nodded, before turning to look towards Hermione. "Can you bring me my staff and my sword please? I'd rather be happier having them nearby." The girl nodded and stood up, quickly

leaving as Harry moved his arm towards the bed desk's drawer and opened it, taking out his wand in the process.

The wand sparked happy golden glints as it tip sailed into the air. He sighed at such a display of affection.

"I haven't gone anywhere you worrywart." He muttered to the wand, much to Lillian's clear surprise. "It's not like I'm going to abandon you. I don't even know how to use a staff to begin with."

"Harry? You're talking to your wand?" She asked curiously.

"Of course I am." He replied surprised, "Why wouldn't I?"

"Because...it's a wand?" Lillian retorted as if she was claiming some sort of unspoken truth.

"Lillian, wands chose their owners." He whispered calmly. "There is an intellect, always a brain, behind a choice." He added feeling quite calm about it. "Maybe you didn't understand at the time, but your wand is not only a part of you...but it's also something else. Something more, that has chosen you as its vessel. My wand is jealous, has a fiery temper and yet is extremely loyal to me, just as I am to her. We both accept each other and our spells are fiery to behold: I scorched Inferis with it, and she understood and burned them to crisp." His voice sounded so far away as he spoke, that he found himself making a small pause.

The memory of the cave, of the sword plunging into the sides of Fluffy, of him bringing the Inferi to bow to his will...he could feel them, feel their souls still torn in screams cast within the deep bowels of the sea. He felt them, and he understood what he had to do.

"Sophie?" He asked to the empty room, and as he did the phoenix appeared in a shower of golden sparks, trilling happily as it did.

"Can...can you bring down Nurmengard's cornerstone?" He asked the phoenix, who quietly shook her head. "Then...I'll have to go there?" He added, as the bird found himself nodding firmly. "Can I go after dinner?" The bird flapped its wings, as if to say he was free to do it when he wanted to, but the sooner would be better.

"After dinner it is." He muttered.

"Harry? You can't go to Nurmengard after dinner!" Lillian blurted out, "There's curfew!" He raised an eyebrow at that, staring at the girl. "What? My parents didn't like me escaping from the ministry..." Another soul freezing gaze went right through the girl making her flinch. "And...well...we're just children right? Curfew is normal isn't it?"

He looked at her with disbelief. He actually pondered whether to give a scathing reply or not, but settled for merely moving his legs to the side of the side of the bed and standing up. The invisible cloak shifted its weight as the invisibility cloak hidden within moved. He grasped onto the cloak that felt strangely warm to the touch and chuckled.

"Lillian." He whispered as his hand took out from within the cloak the invisibility cloak, "Try and stop me." And as the door open and he shrouded himself with the cloak...

The cloak fell heavily upon his shoulders. It did not turn him invisible, instead merely resting against his back as a mantle of sorts, while Hermione entered the room with his staff and sword. He frowned but tried to appear gracious as he grasped Merlin's staff and Excalibur. The moment he grabbed both, he finally turned invisible.

He raised a surprised eyebrow at that bit of knowledge he just had discovered. So either the sword of Arthur or the staff of Merlin could see through the Invisibility cloak. Why was that? He actually began to mentally argue as he lowered the cowl of the cloak, the rest of himself becoming visible as he did so.

"How do you do that?" Lillian muttered in awe. "How do you control the cloak?"

"Uh? Why, isn't it normal?" Harry asked back. Lillian shook her head strongly.

"No! It doesn't...it just covers you, and the clasp? Where did it come out from?" The clasp? What was his sister talking of now? He fingered the invisibility cloak's clasp, seeing for the first time a small symbol that stood in the center of it. A symbol just like the one he had on his ring, a symbol just like the one that stood on the side of

his staff, a symbol that stood precisely on one of the sides of the handle of Excalibur.

Merlin had created the cloak? Hadn't it been made by the Peverells?

But that was how the story went, and the three had received it from 'Death' itself. What if instead of Death, they had received it from Merlin himself? Yet it didn't make much sense, could it? Why would a mad man deep within the bowels of the sea...

Unless, of course, the man had gone there against his will later on, after having faked his death to the public. He then later on reappeared to his grandchildren, because otherwise it would have been 'Wyllt' as a surname rather than Peverell, to gift them, under the guise of 'Death' trinkets to help them on their way...if that was the case, then the myth became a far easier story to understand...but it left open a glaring question: if Merlin was the grandfather of the Peverell, and Merlin was the son of Rowena and Salazar, albeit with a different surname for some strange reason, and if he now was his apparent 'heir'...and if the Peverell were then descended into the Potters...

Just what, in the name of all that was holy and unholy, was his surname now!?

Griphook

Griphook was a goblin accountant. He was the best in what he did, and numbers came to him as easily as gold flowed in and out of the vaults of those he was tasked to take care of. He had had many vaults assigned to him over the course of the decades spent working at Gringotts, and by then he knew by heart all of them. As he strolled through his assigned vaults, taking a set of more comfortable moving chairs since the mine carts were reserved to the wizards who took money out of the bank, he began to frown.

He had passed through vault twenty-six three times already. That just wasn't possible, unless there had recently been a large influx of new vaults. With every new vault, the Gringotts' vaults moved a bit further down, as if they were giant drawers that could be pushed. They didn't hold dragons down in their depths for no reason after all...the fact they could roast thieves was just an added benefit.

Finally, he managed to check in Vault Four-Hundred and Sixty-Six, leaving to him only one last vault before being able to call it quits and go home. He began to move his walking chair towards the high-numbered vaults, the ones held by old and rich families. With the mine cart, it would have taken him an excruciatingly small amount of time...but the stress was on the adjective 'excruciating'. He was a goblin, not an imbecile.

He chuckled to himself as he finally reached the vault he had to control. The Potter's vault held a set of smaller Vaults directly linked to it, in the form of trust funds for their children or in the case a caretaker had to be taken to educate a young lord or miss. He was about to tick off his check mark when a thought entered his mind. He looked once more at the fault and at the Potter's family tree. James Potter and Lily Potter had the big vault. Lillian Potter had a small trust fund. Hermione Granger had been assigned a small amount in secret that had to be sent as 'Ministry Excuses for having ruined her life'.

Where was Harry Potter's money then? If somebody thought he could steal from Gringotts or try something underhanded like fake a merger without his approval...He was about to get a load of Goblin steel in his guts, that was what was going to happen! So it was with an angry glare to a nearby goblin that he cursed in Gobbledygook.

"WHERE THE HELL DID THE VAULT GO!? VAULT P-813-HP-TF! Trust fund for Harry Potter! Where did the damn vault..." As he screamed pointing his finger at the genealogy table, the goblins near him stopped to listen in.

"Sir," one of the goblin whispered, his eyes looking through a ledger and suddenly paling as it added, "It's in merging."

"Merging?" Griphook raised an eyebrow. Merging meant that the vault's contents were being poured into another one, by the laws of a cadet branch being engulfed into a main family branch if someone married into it or was adopted into it. It happened sometimes during Pureblood marriages: a set of minor vaults ended up merged in a bigger one if or when some relations of both sides began to die. It was easier to control a big and single vault rather than a thousand and more of them. "Merging with what?"

"Vault W-1-MW." The goblin ledger reader said in a tiny meek voice, something that didn't normally belong to a goblin, but in this case...in this case it actually did.

"..." Griphook didn't answer, his right hand raised as if to beg the other goblin's pardon, before simply nodding to no-one in particular, and then adding quietly. "And...why Merlin's?"

"Heir." The other goblin remarked. "Furthermore sir...there's a problem." He added carefully.

"A...A problem?" Griphook gulped heavily. This wasn't good. If the chief heard of any problems with a vault, no...scratch that, THE vault...

"Sir, Merlin's line is tied with the Peverells. It's older than the Potters for the claims on the Gryffindor line."

"Well...Harry Potter is still Harry Potter, it's not that big of a problem, right?"

"The charter has the boy emancipated for the ancient law of first blood, sir." The meek goblin whispered in awe. "And with the full pardon of the ministry, his accounts are unfrozen and merging in the immediate. Gryffindor. Slytherin. Ravenclaw. Hufflepuff..."

"Hufflepuff?" Griphook yelled, "How in the bloody hell..."

"He was adopted by Scamander. Madam Bellatrix is sought after for use of unforgivables on the boy, she's been cast out of the descendant line and so..."

"You mean the boy has the four founders' vaults!?" Griphook was starting to see stars, real wide and sparkling stars.

"It gets worse."

"No!" Griphook shrieked. "NO. I refuse! What else is there!? Now you're going to tell me he's got, I don't know any more: a dragon and is coming here with an army!?"

"Grindelwald's vault is officially to be handed over to him. The rights of Durmstrang are his like those of Nurmengard. He is also in

possession of the rights of Azkaban." The goblin reading the ledger grimaced.

"He just upped the rest of wizardry society in one fell swoop, Griphook. He's actually a completely free emancipated adult with at the very least four votes in the Wizengamot from the founders' houses, plus those of the cadet branches that have died out."

Griphook right hand shot to his forehead as he began to feel the start of tremendous headache.

"Anything else you want to tell me, before I write a letter to Mr...what the hell is his surname to begin with now?"

"Slytherin is technically the oldest surname available, but he was cast off...apparently, and then re-inserted in as Wyllt. So it's Wyllt."

"Cast off? How, did Salazar Slytherin himself wake up from his death?" Griphook snorted, "Anything else I should know?"

"No. Unless Perenelle Flamel dies that is." The ledger goblin remarked with calm, closing the big book.

"You know: I hate Pureblood societies stupidly tight blood ties in moments like these." Griphook muttered the headache and the stars rising up as he turned to leave. "And just of how much paperwork are we talking of?"

"Considering everything, sir? At the very least eight months of work to get it all sorted out."

To those words...Griphook fainted.

All Goblins' work had to be done in triple copy, after all.

Author's notes

And here we go. Next chapter will be filled with talking. A bit of aftermath. More talking. Bit more of aftermath.

Slowly but surely the number of followers grow (just like the number of favorites and reviews). Last chapter was chapter 70 actually, this

one is chapter 71. Reached 136,972 hits. Get at least three thousand an update by now. Glad to know I'm read (even though only a few trusty guys review the chapters, thus digital bacon to you guys!)

I'm actually starting to think if maybe I should try my hand on Original Fiction or not. (Not here of course, there is always Fictionpress). Penny for your thoughts? (Digital Penny of course)

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 25

"Incendio Grata!" The voice yelled out loud as a downpour of scorching flames came at him from above.

"Extinguo!" He retorted, his wand pouring from its tip black powder that engulfed the flames, snuffing them out from the lack of oxygen to burn. He then flicked his wrist in a turn motion whispering "Fulmen." A small spark shot in the air, hitting the blackish cloud of powder as it travelled through the charged atmosphere all the way to the other side, where a girlish yelp told him all that he needed to know.

"Verto, Vorto, Muto et Permuto." He muttered as his wand made small concentric spins to make the dark cloud twist around, creating a way in the middle for him to run through. His feet softly tapped against the ground as he charged ahead, before spinning midway and entering the dark fog. He tapped a bit more with his feet against the ground, before sending a slight amount of smoke in the direction he had heard the yelp coming from.

"Expelliarmus!" Hermione's voice exclaimed suddenly, a jet of red energy dashing just a few inches away from his face.

"Ventus!" Lillian's voice echoed on the other side, and a few moments after she said that, a strong gust of wind spiraled into the air and slammed in the ground a few meters away from him. He moved his own wand in a crescent-like pattern towards the sky, and the next moment he was floating above the battlefield.

The Quidditch pitch of the Potters was the spot they had chosen to put some practice in before lunch and subsequent dinner with Albus, and as it stood now, he was clearly enjoying a winning streak unperturbed by his two foes 'viciousness'. Hermione was smart and knew many spells, many of which she could cast with little to no problem. Lillian too knew a couple of spells she had been taught by both her parents and herself. He on the other hand was severely limited.

Sure, he had probably the largest amount of spells at his beck and call, but the problem was that the vast majority of them were outright

lethal. He could yell repeatedly 'Ico' a thousand times, or use his now trademark 'Trudo'. Sure, he could water them down in power and intention, but if he did that then his wand would add her trademark effect of setting things on fire. The Heliopath core apparently felt it was helping him by giving an extra push to his weaker spells.

No amount of trying to convince the core of the opposite actually worked, and the fact he had entered a long discussion with it, and the wood who was trying his best to mediate between the two, had made the two girls laugh at him for a good quarter of hour. He had then proceeded in firing at the two of them enough stinging hexes to make them regret laughing at him.

Flying without a broom was different. Well, it was strangely more of a levitating with bouts of hovering mixed with pushing, but it was still flying. He deftly flung himself to the left, avoiding a bout of red spells launched at him. He smiled warmly as he began to chuckle and laugh. His wand spun in his hand, and the cloud of black smoke that should have dispersed by then condensed and increased in size, spinning in a black vortex that soon engulfed him in mid-air.

The spells flew and he kept on dodging them, his body twisting out of harm's way as he barely avoided a light hex to his right. He flew in that direction, tackling to the ground a body and grasping for its wand.

"Hey!" Hermione exclaimed, the moment her wand was snatched away from her.

"Got to go Hermione! See ya!" He replied cheekily, before pushing against the ground with both his feet, jumping in the air once more. Damn if he enjoyed flying. He had always been afraid of falling, of not being in control...but this? This was different. He had control, as long as his wand stood in his hand he was perfectly in control of everything.

He landed in the general direction of where his sister was meant to be, and with a flick of the wand, the dark smoke dispersed. Lillian was holding her wand in front of her. Her position was eerily reminiscent of the one he used to adopt while training with Gellert, but it also was substantially different: for one thing, it was slightly wrong.

"Right leg an inch back, Lillian." He commented, "You won't get enough push to scuttle backwards otherwise." He added as he flicked his wand to send a Flipendo over at the girl.

Lillian jumped back a bit and moved to the left, avoiding the spell as it harmlessly lost power and disappeared in thin air. "That's not fair!" She exclaimed. "You can do silent spells!"

Harry rolled his eyes. "It's barely a Flipendo." He muttered, "Should I use the Cuspis Terrae wandlessly, then you would have reason to worry. Unluckily, it appears it was a one-time fluke." Which had brought down a Cerberus, a Cerberus he had then killed, and because of that it was a feat he'd rather not try again to do...especially not against his sister.

"And I'm not using my sword either." He added. "Really, do you still have to whine about it?"

"Sorry," she replied downcast, "Just...I'm..." She bit her lip and said nothing more. He took the moment to fling a Flipendo at her again, this time hitting her on the stomach and making her yelp in pain. "No fair!" She exclaimed growling slightly.

"All is fair in love and war." Harry retorted calmly. His wand sparking as it suddenly lashed out a whip of fire. "Should we dance?" He asked with a Cheshire cat grin, "Or do you yield?" He snapped the whip on the ground.

"Yield!" Lillian mumbled, rubbing the sore spot on her stomach where she had been hit. "How do you do that with your wand?"

He shrugged as he let go of the fire spell, before pocketing his wand in his sleeve. Hermione joined them a few seconds afterwards, and he handed the girl's wand back to her. "It's not difficult. You need just the right perspective." He commented.

"You make it sound easy." Lillian deadpanned.

"Maybe it's because I'm used to far more difficult odds." Harry retorted, his thoughts drifting to the first wand he had ever used, "or maybe it's because as I said before...talking to one's own wand works?"

"Children!" A voice rang from one of the windows of the Potter's mansion, "It's lunch time! Go and wash your hands, we'll eat in the kitchen!"

"We're coming mom!" Lillian yelled back. "Harry won again!" She hastily added with a slightly pouting voice. "Maybe dad should fight him!"

"I'm sure he'd be delighted to," Lily replied from the window, beaming a smile in their directions as they moved closer. "Is anyone hurt?" She asked, looking them over with her green eyes that should be the same as his. Yet whenever he looked at himself in a mirror, his were a slight shade darker. His eyes were haunted. He had never given much thought of the books who said that the hero had haunted eyes, because after all, what could it mean? Were there ghosts haunting the eyes? It turned out that having haunted eyes meant having them lose that slight brilliance that happiness could bring. It meant that others could see an inner turmoil brewing and growing within one...

It was also a strangely easy way to define a character as a brooding type.

He wasn't brooding though.

His hands washed, he entered the kitchen to find his 'father' already sitting at the head of the table. There was a spot free between Hermione and Lily, while Lillian was on the other side of the table. He shrugged mentally as he sat between his 'mother' and his...friend. He was actually surprised to be able to call the girl his friend, but after all they had lived through some pretty harsh adventures together, hadn't they? It wasn't as if he could call her something else after having repeatedly saved her life and what not.

"So champ," Harry mentally shuddered at the nickname. Really? Champ? Couldn't he be called something more...normal? Like 'Kind' the German for kid, or 'boy' or 'kiddo'? Did he really have to be 'Champ'?

"I was told you mopped the floor of Hermione and your sister." James said with a small smile, "Must be the Potter's blood. Transfiguration of actual spells is really hard to learn and..."

"So that's how you're doing it!" Lillian exclaimed, "You transfigure spells midway!"

"It's far more difficult to do than to say it, Lillian." Their father replied carefully, "Transfiguration doesn't generally require words, but it requires intent all the same. So when he created the fire whip," somebody had been watching them train...apparently, "he both used Incendio and transfigured the fire into a weapon. Had he made a mistake, he could have pretty much burned himself."

"I didn't use Incendio." Harry retorted calmly, taking a sip of water. "I used Ignis."

James stilled and whipped his head so fast towards Harry that it could have been comical to begin with. His eyes widened for a moment, before his hands clenched the silverware and he looked at him, at Harry, as if he had grown three or four heads.

"Ignis?" James croaked out, "Why would you use Ignis during a spar!?"

"I didn't use it." He replied calmly, "I just brought it out to convince Lillian to surrender." He admitted that much, "I know perfectly well how to tone down my spells." He added after a moment, understanding why the man was strangely looking at him. If you give a kid a gun, but you fill the gun with paint bullets or rubber pellets, the most you can get is if by mistake it hits someone else in the eye. If you give a kid a gun with enriched uranium bullets...then you better hope the kid knows when to shoot and when not to.

"That's...That's a wonderful display of maturity on your side." Lily cut in, trying to defuse the situation. "Who taught you? It's not in the Hogwarts curriculum."

He was about to say Gellert. Then he realized just what Hermione had told them, and quickly changed his answer midway. "I was taught by the Bloody Baron and the Grey Lady." He replied, which was half a truth and half a misdirection in order to keep it all pinned on people who would not be able to give credit to his story. He kind of missed Henry's bantering on power being right, or Helena's jabs on knowing things to destroy governments.

He kind of missed their lessons together. His face had probably turned sad, because James quickly changed the argument.

"Had I known about that I would have asked for the Baron to speak in class: I'm sure nobody would have fallen asleep afterwards!" James chuckled nervously, as his eyes moved to look at his wife.

"Harry dear," he shuddered mentally again as his 'mother' talked to him, "Could you please not come armed at the table?" The woman asked.

"Better dead than without my sword and staff." He replied as calmly as possible.

"Ah...is there...a story, behind them?" James asked searching for the right words. Apparently they both were ready to make small concessions, if to keep a normal family life going on. Hermione had unnaturally tensed as his 'father' asked the question, while Lillian was looking at him with curiosity too. His friend didn't actually need to know what his staff and sword were to understand how important they were. She would just hide them for him or retrieve them for him and so on. It didn't matter if it was Excalibur or a toy sword. That thought made him actually smile and feel a bit of a tingling emotion in his chest.

"There is a history with them actually." He answered back, "But..." He sighed, "It's not something I can just say."

"Did you have to swear an oath?" James was suddenly serious as he spoke, "On your magic? On your life? Was it with Salazar? No, don't answer. If you were forced to an oath of silence it might have consequences even to imply something..." The temperature in the room dropped a few degrees as James' hazel eyes bore holes into his head, or at least tried to.

"Nothing of the sort." Harry muttered, shaking his head slowly. "It's just that..." He hesitantly added, "I...I'd rather not."

"You don't trust us with it, right?" James awkwardly said a few moments afterwards. "It's...It's all right Harry, if you stole them from Hogwarts or from Salazar or even Voldemort...it's all right. I just want to make sure they aren't cursed."

"I've been using them for weeks." He half-lied, "They aren't cursed."

His 'father' took a small steadying breath, before slowly nodding. "All right...I'd rather check on them myself, but...but it's fine. Really, probably better to let Dumbledore handle it but if you haven't dropped dead or anything," Lily shot him a sour look, "Then there's really nothing wrong in the...sword and the staff..." He grimaced as he said the last part.

"Godric Gryffindor had a sword too." Lillian suddenly said, as if to 'defend' his idea of sword-wielding. "Doesn't that mean Harry is more Gryffindorish than the others?"

"Well, as long as he doesn't bring it with him at school." James commented. "You won't bring it at school, right?" The man asked, looking at him for confirmation.

Of course he wouldn't! He'd leave Excalibur, the sword of Arthur, the damn sword that was practically priceless...with the Potters. Meaning it would go to Dumbledore in the blink of an eye, just like Merlin's staff. What was he, an idiot? If they wanted his sword and his staff...then they'd have to pry them both from his death and stubborn fingers.

"Actually, I think I will, or I'll keep on going to Durmstrang." Harry replied most diplomatically. "I think they won't mind. There was fencing and also a sword course in their electives, right Hermione?"

"Y-Yes!" The girl stuttered out slightly nervous.

"Now Harry, listen here..." James began coldly. "Bringing a sword to school is not something you can do. The staff? All right, it's a bit of a problem but if it helps you can, but with a sword you risk harming someone else. And what if in a fit of rage you end up hurting someone? It's not as if..."

"I'm not one for bullshitting my way through things." He finally snapped, getting wide eyes and mouth open from the persons in the room, even as Lily instinctively exclaimed 'Language!'.

"Either Hogwarts accepts me with a sword and a staff or it doesn't, and if it doesn't then there's always Durmstrang to go to...and you

are talking as if I had no choice in going to Hogwarts...Hermione and I don't even have the books for the school!"

"We...We were planning a family trip to Diagon Alley tomorrow." Lily meekly said, "Surely you'd rather be at Hogwarts, right? You've been there longer than Durmstrang..."

"I..." He closed his mouth for a moment. "I don't know."

"Well, there's still time!" Lily exclaimed. "Christmas isn't even around the corner...I'm sure we could have the sword blunted or smoothed with a charm..."

Harry held himself from snorting a reply, instead actually nodding to his 'mother' and her words.

"Durmstrang is closed for the time being," James sighed changing the argument again. Apparently the man was actually trying not to get on his bad side. It was...well, it was sort of commendable. He could even understand the arguments about a sword: he'd be worried too, but they gave children their wands to carry around! What was worse, a wand or a sword? "You haven't read the daily prophet yet?"

He shook his head. His father merely flicked his wand, as the paper slowly flew in the air before landing on his lap.

His eyes flicked over to the main title, and his blood literally froze.

"Pardoned Criminal saves Hogwarts from returned Founder and from Dark Lord's plot!" The headline bellowed. Beneath it stood a picture, a dark one too, about a guzzling rain and someone fighting off Salazar with some strange amounts of powerful magic that...that he hadn't cast...the picture had been taken while he had been elsewhere, it wasn't him the one fighting. It wasn't him. Had he...Had he gotten the fame for the deed of someone else?

"Harry Potter. This name might bring back to memories the boy whom we spoke of as the second coming of You-Know-Who, as Headmaster Albus Dumbledore stated to us last year. This year, instead, he is our noble savior. Dumbledore himself admits his mistakes, and states that had he been a bit younger, he might have remembered just how kids tend to act when wrongfully accused.

Well, Harry Potter didn't simply seek proof of his innocence anywhere: he outright went to the heart of the problem, as we are informed by a secret source that he was in Durmstrang, learning the arts of Gellert Grindelwald himself to battle the man!

Indeed, the tale which we are about to tell you has been largely confirmed by Miss Granger, another wrongfully accused witch whom Harry Potter, in an extreme display of loyalty and unwavering nobility of spirit asked to be pardoned too together with his sister, held in the ministry for clarification, and Mister Rubeus Hagrid, the gatekeeper of Hogwarts.

All these people are intimately connected by a dreadful mistake Albus Dumbledore made, years ago: he admitted a student in his school, Basileus Sfor. Said student was none other than Gellert Grindelwald himself! The dark lord was dastardly sorted into Ravenclaw, and proceeded to corrupt the upper echelons of the house. Nurmengard was believed inescapable, and yet for its architect not only was it easy, but it was even easier let everyone believe him still imprisoned. For years he walked in the halls of Hogwarts, he spoke to the children as he corrupted and molded young minds. For years he planned a devious plot that blossomed in a crescendo of hostility and segregation.

During first year, he split apart the school into Ravenclaw and Slytherin against Hufflepuff and Gryffindor. During second year, he used Miss Granger under Imperius to literally abuse dark artifacts within the castle. During third year, he outright brought the segregation and separation of the houses to its extremes, destroying the peace and creating a civil war within the school. The numbers of victims in the Aurors' lines reached the two digits last night, when Auror Matthew Meng died due to a curse which the healers at St. Mungo could not heal.

Yet Salazar Slytherin was brought back from Durmstrang, through the use of a dark ritual that without a doubt required many lives to be given. It leaves little to doubt that Gellert Grindelwald was ecstatic as he prepared for the arrival of Salazar, repeatedly claiming to his other students how it was 'Harry' who was coming back. Believing in him, and in a far more light-sided dream of Hogwarts unity, the Ravenclaws and Slytherins followed him.

During the ensuing scuffle, many students were wounded when Albus Dumbledore, believed dead but in truth having merely faked it so as to catch the culprit of all the operation, ended up having to enter the fray in order to avoid more blood being shed. While the Headmaster of Hogwarts fought however, in the other side of England a boy no older than thirteen fought to a standstill Salazar Slytherin himself and emerged victorious! Navigating on two muggle ships of the second world wide war, sailing with an army of Inferi stolen from Nurmengard and from Gellert himself and the Dementors of Azkaban, the boy, the brother of the Girl-Who-Lived, hidden from his real family by a foul plot of You-Know-Who fought not for himself but for all of Wizardry Britain!

A true example of bravery that must run in the blood of the Potters, said to be descendants of Gryffindor himself. Albeit Harry Potter is a Ravenclaw student, his wits and his bravery brought him to shed light on the evil figure of Basileus Sfor, and uncover the truth beneath the mask of smiles. Indeed, just as we owe the girl who lived for her defeat of You-Know-Who, we owe now to Harry Potter a debt for his defeat of Salazar Slytherin!

Salazar Slytherin marched against Britain on Durmstrang itself, as it is with deep satisfaction that this reporter can finally reveal that the school famous for the dark arts is none other than a giant floating iceberg herself! The ship has been powered by ancient and most evil rituals, yet none of the English Aurors have managed to enter the complex floating upon icebergs. The Dementors of Azkaban are apparently holding the area itself, waiting for their King to come.

What secrets does Harry Potter hold, to be at such a young age already this powerful? Is he a child prodigy? A genius? A second coming of Merlin himself? This reporter can only hope for an interview quickly with the boy-wonder in question! Cornelius Fudge, prime minister of magic, has set in motion the events to assign the boy the Order of Merlin, First class.

For more information on Gellert Grindelwald, page 2.

For more information on Dumbledore's term as Headmaster of Hogwarts, page 7.

For more information on the Slytherin's founder..."

He blinked. Carefully he folded the newspaper and looked with what he could presume were wide doe-like eyes.

"What does it say?" Lillian asked curiously.

"I think...I just made myself a hero." He muttered with awe, as Hermione held her breath to his side, having probably read the newspaper together with him.

"Harry, that's wonderful!" Hermione exclaimed suddenly, hugging him tightly and giving him one of those noisy 'smack' kisses on the cheek. He actually felt strangely warm and with a heated face as he looked in surprise and shock at the girl. For her part, she actually blushed and stammered at the realization of what she had done. She had kissed him on the cheek.

He had never been kissed on the cheek before.

"Hermione!" Lillian literally screeched in embarrassment. His sister was clasping both her hands tightly, nervousness showing on her face as she saw that. His 'mother' was showing a sort of smirk and his father on the other hand merely chuckled something about the 'Potter's charm'.

It did however settle the argument for the time being, and albeit he couldn't actually look at Hermione for the rest of the lunch, nothing else was said. As soon as he was done, he excused himself from the table and headed off towards the back yard.

The backyard of the Potter's mansion was more of an exotic garden than an actual yard. It actually also was an orchard, if one looked closely between the stuffed up plants. Apparently being a magical individual meant that plants could not only grow one next to the other, but also one within the other and so on.

It was sort of strange how they smelled too. Instead of the normal odor of fertilizer, or of fruits or flowers in bloom, the smell was sort of fixed on pumpkin soup. Yet there weren't any more pumpkins in the back yard of the Potter mansion than rose bushes or pineapple plants. He sat down with his back against the wall, and he began to think about what he had to do.

It was after all his future, wasn't it?

He could choose now. Durmstrang didn't appeal Hermione any more than Hogwarts, he was sure about it. He could convince those of Beauxbatons to hold the girl, couldn't he? The headmistress hadn't been particularly against the idea of the two of them learning in the school, and last he remembered...He nearly choked on his saliva.

He had forgotten he had simply disappeared from the school with Lillian and Hermione, leaving behind quite a load of questions to be answered. The other two hadn't probably even stopped for a moment to think at all they had gone through, because now that he had time, finally, to catch up, a lot of stuff remained in the middle.

What about his 'mother' number two, Bellatrix? Was she still around, maybe trying to grab him at the first moment available? What about Voldemort? Was he still around planning? What were...the Horcrux. Voldemort had said it: he had used them for some reason, to stay alive. He had to...He had to do what, precisely?

He blinked as the thought of doing absolutely nothing nestled into his head nicely. He could let Dumbledore and Voldemort kill each other. He could just...no, that wouldn't do. If he spoke to the Headmaster and told him about Voldemort, then the Daily Prophet's article would be wrong. If that happened, then people would probably start to question the truth of the rest of the article.

His pardon hanged not on the fact that he was innocent, but because he simply was such a strong wizard he had defeated Slytherin himself. His pardon was based on the biggest lie ever to be built, because someone else had done the deed in his place...and was now standing silent. Who could have done it? Dumbledore most certainly wouldn't have, if his plan had been to grasp the power of the Wizengamot all for himself. It couldn't be Voldemort or Gellert...

His thoughts drifted to Nicholas Flamel. The alchemist had been old enough to be quite powerful...and the man had probably died to defeat Salazar. If he had died...then he just hoped that Hagrid would come out, wherever he had ended up being sent by the philosopher's stone's creator.

The souls screamed...in pain. The memory of the stone's substance, of its prime materials...it hit him like a train as he found himself gritting his teeth. The philosopher's stone was made of souls.

Hundreds, thousands of them...and it stood at Hogwarts the key to it all.

He had no choice. If Dumbledore ended up grasping the stone...then all would be lost. He didn't doubt for a moment that the Headmaster was evil and held an evil plot hanging around the entire world, and somebody had to stop him. That somebody being him however was open to debate internally.

On one side, he felt that if he just manned up and roared to the heavens him being some sort of mix between King Arthur and Merlin, he'd get heard. The problem was that he'd be challenged too. And what would happen when he'd be found guilty of having lied to earn his pardon? If he couldn't defeat Dumbledore, then he wouldn't be as strong as the world or the Prophet thought him to be, wouldn't he?

And...

And strangely, against all odds, he understood why Dumbledore had endorsed the fact that he was a really strong student: because it was a lie. It was a lie. It was a clear, easy to discern lie that would work as long as Dumbledore backed it up, thus indebting himself to the old man. He had to admit, the man's work was smooth.

On the other hand, he had a leeway Dumbledore didn't have: he could run with Sophie.

Having sat down with his back against the wall of the Potter's mansion, he heard the door click open a few seconds later, the figure of Lillian showing itself in the doorway. She held herself against the side of the door, half of her body hidden and the other half instead visible, plus her head. She seemed to be hesitant, looking at him as he stood there under the rays of the sun.

"Harry?"

"Yeah?" He commented, closing his eyes as he let the sun's ray warm his face.

"Are you going to run away again?" She whispered. He actually heard her throat hitch as she asked him that question.

He took a deep breath, before absentmindedly shaking his head. "I'm not."

"Promise?" Again, what was the source of his sister's fear now? He slowly opened his eyes and blinked them in surprise. His sister had moved from the doorway to barely a few feet away from him, lowering herself down while holding both of her hands against her knees to keep herself stable. She looked sort of sad too, as if she was reminiscing something sad or grievous.

"I'm done running." He commented. "I might just charge in a different direction though," he tried as a joke to lighten the atmosphere...but it fell flat. Lillian smiled at him hesitantly, but then shook her head slowly.

"You know, we had boggarts in class." She whispered quietly, "Boggarts take the form of one's greatest fear." She explained, "You know what mine was?"

She stood quietly for a moment, a small bitter smile on her face as she spoke again, "It was you." She added. He looked at her perplexed, Lillian didn't seem afraid of him now, was she? "I'm not afraid of you..." She murmured, as if she could read his mind, "I'm afraid of what you think of me."

He raised an eyebrow, perplexed.

It wasn't making much sense now, was it?

"I'm the Girl-Who-Lived." She snorted, "And yet all I do is freeze up, cry, call for help, scream at Ron to stop being an idiot, do stupid things that hold nothing. I get people pleading in tears to get to shake my hand, more people than I can remember bring me gifts every year, a few even named me their heir and yet...yet why am I so weak compared to you?" She asked choking back a sob. "It's not...it's not fair. I have to kill or be killed by Voldemort," Lillian's throat hitched as she actually began to sob through her words, "And I don't know where to start and you just go through everything without a problem...I can't compare to you. I'm not a hero. I...I don't want to be special."

Then she finally nailed the coffin of understanding.

"And yet I am and you weren't before. You lived with those horrible muggles and suffered everything and yet you can defeat bloody Salazar Slytherin without breaking a sweat, you can make friends with a word and everyone likes you sincerely for what you are. You're just...you, and I'm...I'm not...I'm not even living up to what I have to do!" She whimpered.

He looked at her with surprise on his face, before taking a deep breath and exhaling a moment after. Carefully he stood up slowly, and then he gently hugged her.

He was a sucker for sentimentalism.

"All right." He whispered, patting her head softly. "I'll take care of it."

"B-But..."

"Too late. You had me at the 'I'm'." He replied cheekily, rocking the girl slightly back and forth before helping her stand up together with him. "Don't worry you crybaby: I've dealt with an evil lord...I'll deal with another at Hogwarts this year too." He smiled then, and the next thing he knew Lillian was hugging him again, crying on his shoulder.

Embarrassedly he hugged her back, awkwardly patting her as he tried to keep a stray face. In the end, he felt something sort of melt within himself, and he sighed. It was no use.

Even Hitler had moments where he slept like an angel. Even Mussolini was considered a 'charming grandfather'. Even Fidel Castro, Bruto, Caligola and many more tyrants and dictators in the world were but humans in the end. And humans, no matter what, could not keep themselves as flat as machines for the rest of their existence.

Author's notes

I think to make three more chapters to nicely 'smooth' the descent into a happy-sweet few chapters, and then I can strike hard and butcher all hopes into a hellish downtrodden charge to the depths of hell itself.

The Fourth book will start probably in the middle of the third year, post-Christmas Vacation, and continue unto the summer (Which is sort of MY Rowling's Halloween and general hell on Earth thing)

Now Q&A with my faithful readers:

Grindelwald is not in the room of requirements. He's lost in what looks like apparently a sort of dimensional pocket which holds everything that 'time' has stolen from the world.

For original fiction: I was actually thinking neither. Some sort of really grim-dark nine-hundred century stuff with a mixture of truly black magic and horrifying creatures that lurk with steam-punk settings. All cast in a setting of mystery and 'find the culprit' that ends up barely hanging on a thread of what is right and wrong with morality becoming an issue along the way. (Basically, what I usually write as Fanfiction, only turned with a cast of original characters) And the usual comedic moments.

Concerning Perenelle I won't answer. When she'll come out you'll see.

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 26

Harry couldn't miss the air of finality surrounding the house as the dinner hour approached. For safety measures, he had shrunk Merlin's staff and pocketed it inside his invisible cloak. He would have done the same with Excalibur, had the sword complied. As it stood, the sword wasn't as 'flexible' as the staff was. It was meant to cut and cut it would. It would cut through illusions and enchantments, through charms and transfiguration and as he discovered, it would cut through anything that wasn't his own skin like butter. He could still wound himself, but not as easily as the sword could cut through a steel bar or a wooden trunk.

Excalibur's sheathe was a simple leather one, it didn't look at all like the one of the Arthurian legend. The one said to protect from all harm, but then again, hadn't it been stolen in the myth?

He examined the sword, his face scrunching up in an effort to find a way to conceal it on his person. He narrowed his eyes at the base of the hilt, where a small circular hole had been carved. He blinked as he looked at it, and then at his wand. The size was pretty much the same as a wand's tip. It couldn't possibly be, right? Well, but if Merlin was a wizard...who was he to say that Arthur wasn't one too? Maybe it wasn't the sheath of the sword that was magical, but the king himself. Yet it seemed as if the sword was lacking a wand in it. He felt kind of stupid when he stuck his wand within the sword, but as it slid in without a hitch he frowned.

Well, there probably was some sort of magic inherently tied to...

He widened his eyes as the sword began to shrink up to the point where it was no longer a sword...but a metallic glinting wand.

He nearly choked.

Excalibur was a wand!? The metallic wand felt cool to the touch, and yet it thrummed and hummed as happily as his Heliopath's one usually did. Apparently even Arthur didn't always go around armed...or seemingly so.

It was logical: being without a wand was suicidal for any wizard. It made sense there was a way to pocket it or hold onto it, and if Arthur was a ruler of men, then he'd have to pass off as human, wouldn't he? The witchcrafts were...no: that was a wrong time period in a wrong country. What reason would Arthur have to feign being a muggle? It made no sense. Wizards and druids were largely accepted as folklore and back in the days were accepted without troubles.

It puzzled him.

He filed it away for later and slowly went out of his room and down the stairs, to the dining hall. He was wearing some sort of 'casual' but 'neat' wizard robe. Hermione and Lillian were wearing dresses. He actually rolled his eyes. Everyone was so prim and proper that...he mentally counted the chairs.

There were his father and mother's chairs. His was there and so was his sister's. The fifth chair was for Hermione, and the sixth had to be Dumbledore...yet he counted no less than ten chairs. Strangely, the feeling that this wasn't just a normal dinner seeped in, just as he began to imagine who could exactly be invited. Sirius Black was a friend of the family: he could have been invited, making thus the numbers to seven. Then number eight could be Ron Weasley, a friend of Lillian. If, even by happen chance, number nine was the prime minister of magic to give him the Order of Merlin...then who was number ten?

He could ask of course, he was pretty sure he'd be told in a split second who else was invited, but he didn't want to. It was a nice way to spend some time, and as he finally ended up ready to ask, the fire pit burned bright green. Sirius Black stumbled out of the fire together with an old looking man, who seemed to be breathing raggedly.

"Prongs! I got Moony to come around! Couldn't keep him wallowing in his apart..." And then the man suddenly quieted, as his dark eyes loomed over to him and stared. He actually felt a slight shiver, before answering.

"He's in the kitchen."

Sirius nodded, suddenly more somber in attitude as he made his way further away of the fire. 'Moony' walked forward with a sort of hesitant smile, bringing his right hand up, probably for a shake.

"I'm Remus Lupin. You must be Harry, right?" He silently nodded as he shook the offered hand.

"I...I kind of remember you now." The man muttered, "Must be tough..." He whispered. "You'd rather be elsewhere, right?"

He raised an eyebrow, before turning to gaze in the direction of the kitchen, where Sirius had disappeared through the doorway.

"It's not that I don't like it here..." He began, as the man nodded.

"But you can't stand being smothered, right?" Remus smirked. "You should see them when...well, you're bound to know anyhow: I'm a werewolf."

"Oh." Harry raised both eyebrows. "Well...is it like in the myths or is it something more...different?"

"Moon comes up and I end up with a 'monthly' problem, as Sirius put it." Remus chuckled. "It hurts like hell too. Since werewolves lose control during their change we are considered dangerous," the man sighed. "And because we can't actually move for a few days after the change, we can't keep up a job in the wizardry or the muggle world."

The man looked at Harry for a moment longer, before finally turning to the kitchen's door and then whispering slowly.

"I'm fine, but Prongs and the others...they actually care you know?" He hastily said, "Only sometime they care too much and it sort of suffocates me." He shook his head. "I'm not going to break down if I don't leave my house for a few days now, right?"

He nodded back to the werewolf, before slowly starting to hum.

"Dumbledore asked you to come?" For once, he discerned surprise in the look of the man in front of him, and he just knew he had nailed the argument, grabbed the bull by its horns and outright found the

Holy Grail. Dumbledore might have been subtle...but he was paranoid.

Paranoia never actually works when it should, but if you exercise it carefully, it sometimes does yield results. In this case, he knew clearly now what was going on. Probably Dumbledore had hoped for a pity-party or some sort of emotional connection to be formed, and even if that wasn't the purpose, it still reeked of ploy. Giving out a sympathetic view of someone so offhandedly had struck a chord in him. One should never be fed another's truth, but move out to seek his own.

It was actually quite a deep thought.

"The Headmaster believed I could do something in case of...a recalcitrant behavior." The werewolf admitted, "Fudge is coming too, and Albus will be trying to get the man to listen about the werewolf registration acts, as long as there's enough time and..." And he was the objective that Remus had to clear in order for that to happen.

He was beginning to hate dinner the closer it got.

"I understand." He muttered, "I'll make sure to take as little time as possible." He then nodded curtly and turned around, his thoughts on leaving for the library, when the betrayed look on Lillian stopped him from heading for the door. He mentally cursed as he instead deftly made a bit of a wider angle and ended up moving near Hermione. The girl was reading a book while waiting for the rest of the 'guests' to arrive. She was sitting sort of properly in a light green dress with straps for shoulders on the comfortable bright red sofa of the dining hall.

Why wizards had to have chairs and armchairs and sofas in the dining hall was something he couldn't understand. The girl's choice of literature on the other hand, that he could.

"One hundred and one ways to know if you've been slipped poison? Really, Hermione?" He muttered the title out loud enough for her to hear, as he listened in on Remus greeting Lillian and his sister answering the man with a sort of forceful cheer. He ignored them in favor of conversation with Hermione. The girl was reading something useful, after all. Something he'd rather know more about than not.

"Better safe than sorry." The girl replied quietly, her eyes taking on a haunted gaze as she quietly added, "It's how they kept me imprisoned: I was drugged daily." She closed the book. "Dumbledore isn't here yet?"

"No," he replied, shaking his head. "Are you all right?"

She smiled bitterly. "I should be the one asking you that question, Harry." She slowly folded her hands on the book, which rested on her lap.

"I'm fine." He shrugged. "Worse to worse I'll fight my way out of here."

"We." She replied with conviction. She stood quiet for a moment, before murmuring. "I'm...I'm not going to leave your side, Harry. You saved me more times than I can possibly count, when you didn't have to. I was nothing more than a friend of your sister whom you loathed: I would have expected Ron to mount a rescue in Azkaban, not you." She closed her eyes. "You know what the Dementors showed me, what my worst memory was?"

"You don't have to tell me if you don't want to." He replied hastily, "It's...It's not needed, really."

"I don't need to, I want to." She opened her eyes again, "I'm looking at my parents in the ministry. They've just declared me guilty. I see the people up in the seats just look at me with a sort of gleeful gaze, and they're smirking when the obliviators come in and remove all that...everything that my parents knew of me...and they took it all." Her voice hitched slightly, as her eyes turned teary. "Then they looked around, they looked around the room without understanding what was going on and their eyes...they just passed straight through me, as if I was unimportant, as if I was nothing...nothing more than the background."

She closed her eyes and wiped away her tears. "And then they were taken away, and I...I lost them."

"Obliviation can be removed, right?" Harry whispered, embarrassedly not knowing what to do with the tear-eyed girl.

"They're dead." Hermione muttered. "My father...dad didn't...he didn't stop at the red light and was taken out by a truck." She clenched her fists, "Mom forgot about the oven...it burned down the house." She chuckled grimly, "Obliviation has side effects following a massive usage, culminating in repeated loss of consciousness and thought patterns in disarray. Subjects to the Obliviate spell may also..." Her throat hitched again, "May also experience momentary loss of memory not targeted by the spell."

"Hermione..." Harry whispered while looking around in sheer hope that Dumbledore hadn't yet arrived. "Please...It wasn't your fault."

"I know that." She snapped with her eyes blazing with fury. "I know whose fault it is and...Harry," she whispered, "I don't want that to happen ever again. I can't lose you too."

He grimaced slightly as the girl wiped away her tears and brought back a cheerful smile, "Well then, I'll go and help your mother in the kitchen: I just can't stay and do nothing, it's driving me mad."

And then she walked out, leaving him to stare befuddled at his left hand. He opened and closed the palm, looking at the symbol of the Deathly Hallows literally carved into the flesh of both his hands for a moment more, before quietly shaking his head. He didn't need to guesswork his way around this strange event. If his hands had been marked, then certainly something was underway even in that moment.

Something he didn't have to like, but that would inevitably happen anyway.

As the fire pit brightly shone green once more, his eyes turned to focus on the incoming wizards.

Albus Dumbledore strolled in, soon followed by another man that he could recognize from the newspaper as Cornelius Fudge. Yet it wasn't that which caught his attention.

Glinting on the Headmaster of Hogwarts hand...there was a black gem that kept on attracting his attention. He could feel the invisibility cloak hidden by his invisible cloak suddenly stir, and he couldn't help but narrow his eyes. The man apparently saw him, because for once his grandfatherly smile faltered.

"Dumbledore." He commented coldly, looking at the man's clothes instead of his eyes. "Nice ring."

"Indeed." Albus replied with his usually grandfatherly tone. "A gift from an old friend."

"Oh? How curious." Harry replied calmly. "I think I met him too." He smiled, "He was quite...loquacious too. Something about...a game?"

"Oh?" Albus smiled, probably. "Then we should simply talk about him later..." He stopped talking for a moment, "Right, Cornelius? This is Harry Potter." Harry's eyes flicked up for a moment to look at the prime minister, who walked forward with his hand raised. He shook it back and then flinched for a moment. It was as if an electrical discharge had passed through his body by that simple casual gesture.

He smiled bitterly as he removed the hand. It had slightly burned, but he couldn't understand why.

"Are we all here?" Albus suddenly asked, looking around the room and smiling when he saw Remus and Lillian talking...heatedly in a corner.

"Why not, uncle Remus!?" Lillian was heatedly hissing.

"Lillian, it's not..." But by then, their voice died down as they realized they were being watched. "Headmaster! Sorry, I didn't see you." Remus smiled as he walked forward, shaking the hand of the old evil...

"Mister Potter," Cornelius suddenly said, distracting him from following the conversation between Dumbledore, Remus and his sister. "We have a few things to discuss." The man smiled to him, and for a single fleeting instant Harry felt something as his eyes locked with the prime minister. The feeling left a moment later, but it made him narrow his eyes.

"Yes, minister?"

"Oh," the man rolled his eyes, "Call me Cornelius." He chuckled slightly, as he brought both his hands behind his back while straightening himself. "So finally we meet, Harry Potter." He begins with a smirk, "They're already hailing you as a second Merlin...a second coming of Gryffindor and Dumbledore..." The man's eyes went to the older wizard in question. "Quite the change, isn't it, from being called the Dark Lord reborn?"

"People are fickle beings." He replied coolly. He suddenly felt as if a snake was slowly coiling around him, tightening his grip on his lungs and making him sweat. What if the man knew? But then, why would he...

"Heroes are made by the press, but he who controls the press controls the nation's most powerful aspect." Cornelius spoke again carefully, "Wouldn't you like to make it known of your...approval on my re-election?" The spires became visible, metaphorically speaking. The snake's fangs already gleamed in anticipation for the strike.

"Plotting with Dumbledore?" Harry whispered.

"Who, me?" Cornelius raised an eyebrow. "Most certainly not." The minister chuckled. "Everyone works alone in the world, Harry." He whispered. "Some just decide to share a bit of the road together...but make no mistake: it always ends with a corpse in the ditch and another one walking away wealthier."

He chuckled as if he had said a great joke, and Harry stilled, before relenting in the end.

"So, what do you say...hero?" His eyes looked at him, analyzing and scrutinizing his every move as if he expected him to do something else. To call him on a bluff probably or something like that to...His eyes went back to Dumbledore for a moment. The old wizard had just so casually both hands in his sleeves, listening raptly and answering Remus, and yet at the same time those eyes were roaming over their side of the room, as if in wait...

The eyes were in wait for him to make a fuss.

Hermione wasn't in the room. She'd never be used as a witness.

"What if I say yes...and then I refuse later on?" He replied carefully.

"You will find that you have few places to go." The minister answered back with a bright smile. "Why, the ministry does have reach in all places in the world after all...and death is but two words away."

He froze.

No, he couldn't be...

It couldn't possibly be.

He was about to grab his wand, when he stilled recalling where Hermione was...and whom Lillian was talking to. Was their intention to convince him or to take hostage someone he cared for?

In the end, it was something he didn't want to find out ever.

"I understand," Harry quietly muttered. "I think you are doing a great job as a minister, mister Fudge."

"Please," Cornelius beamed a smile at him that was just like that of a snake having sunk its fangs in the prey, "Call me Cornelius." His dark eyes shone briefly, as he turned around and walked towards Dumbledore. "And I was nearly forgetting," the minister added, briefly spinning midway, "The Wizengamot has decided to assign you the First Class order of Merlin. You will receive it on the Four of February at the ministry." The man smiled, "Do not be late."

And then he turned to walk the few steps that separated him from Dumbledore, Remus and Lillian.

His sister actually squealed at that and went over to him to give him a hug. Something that didn't even faze him, as his eyes travelled up and down Cornelius' back of the head. There was something strangely familiar in the way the minister had talked...but he shivered at the thought and let it go.

Dinner, as it turned out once Hermione came back from kitchen with the girl clearly not having been kidnapped, was a quiet affair. Cornelius stood to the right side of Dumbledore who was at one of the heads of the table, while Remus was at the old wizard's left side. Next to Remus was Lillian and to the side of Cornelius was Sirius.

He was next to Lillian while Hermione was in front of him, and since apparently Ron hadn't been able to make it, Lily and James Potter stood at the sides of the table rather than at the head.

It was as if Dumbledore was the host and they the last, but nobody seemed to care...well, nobody but him. It was as the dinner came to an end that Dumbledore asked the dreaded question that made Hermione still like a doe caught in the light of a car.

"So Harry, I know it must be horrible to remember your time running," Dumbledore began with his grandfatherly tone that was starting to make him wretch, "But we would like to have a complete account...on how you managed to arrive at Durmstrang and then defeat Salazar."

Harry took a deep breath.

He could do this.

The glint in the prime minister eyes and in the headmaster's however, didn't bode well at all as he began his heavily edited recollection of events...and somehow he knew that, if there had been a trap, he had sprung it.

Yet did he even have a choice in that moment?

Of course he hadn't.

Draco Malfoy

Mister Riddle was furious. He knew it from the sound of the spells crashing against the wall and tearing away chunks of delicately painted frescos from it. He knew it because he could hear the screams. He knew it because the man had come by the most evil sling of insults before tearing through Crucios into his father's mind. He was standing in a corner of his room, holding his wand tightly and silently praying for the man to disappear.

He had heard of the usage of the Crucio. He had even delighted himself thinking once about using it on an enemy. He had never seen the effects in front of him. He had never felt it on his skin. Hadn't it been for his father and his mother, he would have probably died from it. Now his arms trembled not from fear or fright but from

the unholy terror that shook his very core. Within the mass of hysterical yells and screams few words were understood by him.

'Should have been absorbed', 'Cup destroyed' and 'Bellatrix will burn' echoed through the house, until after what seemed like hours all noises stopped. He took a deep breath and wearily opened his eyes to stare at the door of his room. He could hear the steps of the Dark Lord coming from outside the corridor move closer to his room. He could see the handle of his door move downwards and the door pushed open. He could see the man's smile coming straight at him.

"Draco," his voice spoke gravely, "We have much to do"

Somehow, those words brought on him an all new level of fear.

Neville Longbottom

"And stand straight Neville!" His grandmother snapped at him. He was starting to regret the extended Christmas holidays, if only because his grandmother was being particularly nitpicky. "Captured and held hostage! Really!" She huffed, her wand in her hand. "Frank would have never been captured by Slytherins at school!"

He clenched his fist. To his grandmother, sometimes, he didn't truly know whom she was talking to. Was she talking to him or to some sort of pseudo-Frank that she liked to think him to be? He wasn't his father, but to his grandmother it didn't matter: he'd become him with time of course. If he didn't, then something was wrong on his mother's side of the family.

"Grandmother, I..." He began, only for a stinging hex to be thrown his way. It hit him on the leg and sent him on his knees hissing in pain.

"Stand up Neville! That's just a small thing compared to a Crucio or the Avada Kedavra." The old woman snarled back. "And I told you to dodge! Come on, move your legs and start dodging!"

He groaned as another spell got him in the shoulder. His hand shot up by instinct to avoid another one on the face, and as it began to swell he felt the pain cursing through his body due to the multiple stings.

"Stupid boy! I told you never to use your hands! You need them to use your wand!" Thankfully, his grandmother stopped his training there, bringing her wand back into her small purse and sniffing at the air with an angry scowl on her face. "You're not even making progress. I'm thinking of calling for a private instructor in the end: you're obviously in need of a firmer hand than me."

He lowered his head and stared at the ground, hard. If he stared long enough then maybe a hole would form and he'd be able to get to the other side, or somewhere safer? It was a daydream, but it was one he wouldn't have felt bad if it happened.

"Yes Grandmother," he muttered. He actually wouldn't mind another instructor. At the very least he wouldn't be constantly berated, unless his Grandmother used polyjuiced to feign being someone else or somehow had another 'evil' male twin who was an instructor. He shuddered at the thought: two people like his grandmother in the world were unable to coexist. Reality would do anything to remove at least one of them...he hoped sincerely.

"Go and wash yourself," she curtly muttered, before turning around and heading back in the house. There wasn't even a word concerning his boils or if he hurt. There wasn't even a warning on getting his wounds cleaned or the sting hexes countered. It was implied of course. Still, he was starting to believe that his grandmother wasn't showing her worry for him because she actually didn't worry for him.

In her eyes, he was a bad copy of his father.

He hated that more than anything else.

Harry Potter

"Now my boy, would you be so kind as to show us the tools you wielded to defeat Salazar?" Dumbledore asked, his eyes twinkling in anticipation as Cornelius looked towards him with a sort of gleeful expression. He didn't know which of the two stares he loathed the most, at the moment.

"I'm afraid they're gone." He replied carefully, his eyes on his plate. "I took great care in giving them back to their rightful owner. Sophie,"

the phoenix suddenly appeared on his shoulder, "Was a dear in transporting them back."

"Oh? You didn't say someone had loaned them to you." James blurted out. "Who was it?"

He frowned, before taking a deep breath.

"He wishes to remain anonymous."

"Now, Harry my dear..." Albus began.

"There is also a vow made to keep it such." He added quietly, shrugging slightly as he heard the short set of gasps coming from Lily and the narrowing of eyes of both Cornelius and Dumbledore. "He said it would make things easier, if he wasn't mentioned."

"Certainly, the prospect of you having a vow at such a young age...is worrisome," Albus finally hissed out with quite a pained face, "But then again, your spirit of self-sacrifice is extremely noble." He admitted quietly, before bringing back his full smile. "We will not ask more on the argument." Harry breathed out in slight relief, his hands intertwined as he slowly folded them on his lap. "Have you already chosen your electives for the second term at Hogwarts?" The Headmaster's voice asked.

Harry shook his head, before finally gazing at Hermione and giving her a lopsided smile at her shocked face that soon morphed into a slightly angered scowl.

"I'm going to follow Ancient Runes and Arithmancy," Hermione commented, "Plus Ghou studies."

Harry merely raised an eyebrow.

"What about..."

"They aren't present in the electives at Hogwarts." She replied, "That is...if we go back there. There is always Beauxbatons, or the Universitatis in Italy: Elmo's going there to finish his studies..."

"You spoke with him?" Harry's face probably betrayed his surprise. He hadn't heard anything more from his roommate, not after having seen him limp behind Hagrid and Hermione.

"He told me that when we left Durmstrang," the girl meekly pointed out. "I'm sorry: it must have slipped my mind."

"Doesn't matter." He replied, noticing the gazes of the rest of the table on him. "I'll be taking the same courses as Hermione of course, with Care of magical creatures, Magical Theory and elemental magic..."

"I'm doing Care of the magical creatures and Divination." Lillian blurted out in a sort of embarrassed squeak. "Divination is an easy owl, but Care is done by old Kettleburn and he's a lot more barmy than usual so you can wing another owl out of..." And there Lillian closed her mouth, and looked as if she had just eaten a sour lemon.

"I'm afraid elemental magic and magical theory have been removed from the program," Dumbledore sighed as he said that, "There were not enough funds and thus they had to be taken out. Not many students took the courses to begin with, thus..."

He grimaced slightly, "Ghoul study is still there?"

"It is, but this year too it failed to reach the adequate number of students, and so alas neither you nor Miss Granger may follow it."

"I'll take care of magical creatures then," Hermione piped in quickly. "Divination's rubbish anyway." She added a few seconds later, long enough for the sour look on Lillian's face to turn slightly angry. Harry looked perplexed at that, it was as if the girl was trying to one-up her friend. It made no sense now, did it?

He mentally shook his head as he verbally acknowledged Hermione's choice as his own.

"Excellent." Albus exclaimed, "This has been a very profitable dinner," the headmaster added, "I will see you all at the beginning of the second term. If there's anything you would like to ask of me now, I believe it's your turn to ask questions."

"Can I be transferred of house?" Hermione asked with her voice slightly embarrassed, "I...I'd rather not be in Gryffindor anymore."

"Wh...Why?" Lillian exclaimed in shock, looking with a mixture of betrayal at her friend.

"It's...It's not safe." The girl replied, as Harry's eyes narrowed. Mentally, if there ever was a need to fill in military positions, he already knew where to put Hermione. The girl was right: Hogwarts wasn't actually safe. Gryffindors might still hold antipathies, and the student population that had just then returned from such an ordeal might look at him 'the King' with anything but acceptance. Even if it had all been said to be Gellert plan, his name was the one that had started it all.

He had to go to Hogwarts to keep things safely away from the Headmaster, keep him away from the clock tower and at the same time try and bring forth once more a movement...on the other hand he hadn't thought about how Hogwarts would receive him.

He couldn't just kill off pranking students or the harsh whispers while he walked along corridors now, could he?

"Miss Granger, I assure you none of the students hold you responsible for..."

"Just like they didn't think me guilty of second year?" Hermione actually chuckled at that. It was a sad chuckle, one of those bitter laughs that make you cringe inside because they're hollow and sad. "Headmaster...I know better. Except for Lillian none of the Gryffindors even liked me much. I was too much of a know-it-all. I'd rather be in Ravenclaw."

"If you are sure Miss Granger," Albus' eyes twinkled, and Harry mentally cursed himself for having raised his gaze to look at the situation. He blinked rapidly, before turning to look at Hermione who was strangely giving him small glances. His face turned into a puzzled frown: was she waiting for some sort of...

"I always wondered why you didn't get sorted in Ravenclaw immediately." He finally supplied, sporting a small smile. "Glad to have you onboard the murder of crows." He winked at her.

"Remember the drill: Owls and Newts are to be straight O's, it's the Ravenclaws' tradition."

Hermione giggled then.

And somehow Harry's stomach lurched once more, because he could feel the calculating gazes of Cornelius and Dumbledore on the other side of the table. Somehow, he could even imagine the two of them making plans and drawing lines of potential solutions to him being a threat. Had he just condemned Hermione once more to be a target?

He probably had.

And the sourly pissed look that Lillian was giving Hermione...that two was in need of consideration.

He just hoped things would go by quietly the next day, since visiting Diagon Alley for school supplies couldn't be all that difficult now, could it?

He hoped it, at the very least.

Author's notes

Two more chapters to go.

...Yes, Cornelius is acting strange. Dumbledore seems to have the Resurrection stone on his finger...and he isn't getting cursed? My, my...

Now, for a bit of explanation on the Voldemort 'cursing'.

The attack on Hogwarts was done by Ring-Voldemort.

The Cup-Voldemort is still at large and as the Ring-Voldemort dies and is about to be absorbed, something happens that sends Cup-Voldemort in a rage, and has him 'fake' being Ring-Voldemort to reach the Malfoy's mansion. Since Ring-Voldemort had begun to disintegrate, some memories flowed into the others, which is how Cup-Voldemort got to the Malfoys.

However Cup-Voldemort gets his cup destroyed, probably during the 'trunk' delivery of the ministry to Harry, and that's why he's in a rage: he dies, he has no mean to reform and ends up getting absorbed. (The open channel to Harry is open to debate, who knows if it's still exploitable?)

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 27

Diagon Alley was a trove of stares and whispers. Eyes looked at him from all sides, and for once he felt incredibly self-conscious. He wobbled as he stepped through the doors of the various shops, people opening them for him or smiling at him. They always asked for a handshake, an autograph, sometimes even a marriage application. Wherever he went to buy the school supplies, he was literally assaulted by...fans.

He had a fan base. He, Harry Potter, had a group of fans who seemed to swoon to his every words. He raised an eyebrow as a group of them being literally flung aside by his mother's wand. The woman did this as if it was the most normal thing in the world to do, and that kind of worried him.

"Come along now Harry, we need to get you some Hogwarts' robes." She sweetly said, eerily reminding him for a brief instant of Bellatrix, albeit there was no 'crucio' at the end of the woman's sentence he couldn't help but mentally wince at the memory. As he found out, going shopping with Lily Potter was akin to torture. The woman didn't believe for a single second that he could choose his own robes alone, and thus he was forced to try on different robes, with different types of cloths and various styles.

He still believed each of them the same, but as the purchase was made after an entire hour spent in there, he was truly glad to get out and spend some time just waiting on the street with his 'father'. Swapping places with his sister and Hermione, the two girls entered the shop with his mother again, while he and his father went for the various amenities needed for Hogwarts...things like the books and the potion ingredients.

"Right, I nearly forgot." James muttered as soon as they got out of the apothecary. "I've got to ask: are you the one who has the marauder's map?"

He blinked owlishly at his father, before shaking his head.

"No. Lillian told me she lost it, but I had no need for it in Durmstrang." Harry replied, "I didn't take it."

"All right." The man sighed, "It was a bit of a charm piece that map! To think she lost it like that..." His 'father' scowled. He chuckled a moment later, "I'll have to get Remus and Sirius to make it again then." His face soured for yet another second. "Listen Harry: I'm pretty sure you can take care of yourself," he grimaced, "But there's someone in the school you must be wary of."

Harry tensed. It couldn't be that his father actually doubted Dumbledore, could it?

"There's a man called Pettigrew. He's...He was my friend, and he's the reason you were..."

Bald man. Rat-like face. Voldemort had him in his circle, hadn't he? He blinked at that as the memories of those brief flashes came back to him, as James continued to talk.

"He's a rat animagus...He was in Azkaban, but the Dark Lord..."

"Rat." Hermione whispered, "Rat." She added as the small mouse, hadn't he seen it before? Came crawling out of a corner and towards the girl. She apparently held enough spirits to grab a hold of the pet, before murmuring once more. "Rat."

"If this is a dream, I don't want to wake up." Hermione whispered as she slowly wobbled on her leg. "Let's go Ratman," Hermione added, holding her rat close, "Let's find a room all right?"

He nervously gulped down.

"The Dark Lord probably freed him, or maybe you did." That sounded like an accusation, "By mistake, when you got the Dementors' loyalty." James added hastily, looking sort of guilty for the tone of the previous accuse maybe. "And...I'm sure he's at Hogwarts. I already asked Dumbledore, but he'll probably try and come closer to you or Lillian. Do not leave Hogwarts for the Hogsmeade weekend. I already told Lillian and Hermione, I just..." He took a deep breath.

"Look Harry, I'll be frank. Lily...She was in pieces when she found out about you, and she ran herself ragged to get you back." He showed him an awry smile, "She acts all tough but she's really easy

to break, you know? So...if something were to happen to you or Lillian, I don't know how she'd take it. Please, be careful all right?"

Harry didn't know what to say, so he simply nodded. He awkwardly turned his gaze sideways, looking at the floor of Diagon Alley as his thoughts went to what he knew of his 'mother'. He knew he was doing something wrong in just feigning feeling something, but he couldn't help it. Petunia was his mother, had been his mother, not Lily Potter. Sure, it felt like his heart constricted every time he thought about either woman with some more depth, and that was probably why he immediately diverted his thoughts.

He could think of death and murders with ease, but he could not stand having his brain think about either his real mother or...which of the two was his real mother to begin with? The one who birthed him or the one who raised him? How could he define one and not the other? He shook his head firmly, slapping his cheeks as he finally muttered to the puzzled man next to him whom he had to call 'father'.

"Yeah...Don't worry," he could feel his throat growing parched then, "I'll take care of her."

"Well, both your mother and I will be in Hogwarts too, so if there's anything you want to talk about...you can knock at our doors." James muttered, before turning his gaze elsewhere. "And...You still have your sword, don't you?"

He blinked owlishly, before gazing open mouthed at James. How did he know that!?

"You told us the day before you weren't under any oath of silence." He pointed out, "Then you changed it the next day." He added slowly. "There wasn't a need to lie the first time, so you lied the second." He shook his head. "I'm...I'm just asking you to be careful with them, all right?" Was there a pleading tone in his father's voice?

"You're not going to rattle me off to Dumbledore?" He awkwardly asked.

"Who, me?" There was a forced cheerfulness in his father's tone that Harry didn't like, but he didn't speak as the man continued, "I won't."

The last words were serious, "But Harry...I expect you not to abuse my trust."

In some sort of way, he knew the man was doing his best to act fatherly. He knew it, and yet he couldn't help but feel completely queasy about it. The man wasn't his father and yet...he was trying to be. It was strange, because he continued to feel the idea of just calling it quits and letting the betrayal stand...If he just called him father and Lily as his mother, then he could have happiness, couldn't he? He just had to forget about his own father, who looked under the bed for the boogeyman when he was little. He had to forget about his mother, who baked cakes for his birthdays.

He just had to forget about everything he had been given by his real parents, and then he just had to forget that they had died because of him. If he forgot that, then he could have happiness...even though they called him freak and didn't like him after discovering he had been magical.

"We should be going back by now." James added, interrupting his thoughts.

"I suppose we..." As he said that, he noticed the crowd that had begun to whisper and stop near them suddenly parted as a small goblin made its way towards them. The fact he was wielding a battle axe out in public was apparently some sort of norm, because none of the wizards around actually gave it much of a thought. They did leave him space to pass though.

"Mister Potter!" The Goblin exclaimed with a bright smile that sent shudders down Harry's spine. "Oh, and Mister Potter Senior!" He added addressing his father. "There are some documents that require signing over at Gringotts of the utmost importance!"

"Ehm...All right?" James raised an eyebrow as he chuckled nervously, "I should get my wife and..."

"No Mister Potter Senior: we are speaking about Mister Potter Junior here." The Goblin hastily added. "There have been some...donations, due to his heroic actions to his vault."

James widened both his eyes, before sighing and shaking his head.

"Hasn't Griphook notified that we always refuse donations and that they need to be redirected towards charity funds?"

"Indeed, but in this case the matter is solely related to Mister Potter Junior." The axe-wielding accountant commented, "In fact, I would be extremely pleased if he had the time to come over at Gringotts as soon as possible."

"Well, we were in the middle of..."

"I'm coming." Harry said, interrupting his father immediately. "Better to get this over with, and if...if they're donations, then I'll see what to do then."

"Harry, you're..."

"Emancipated." The Goblin actually intervened as if he had read the man's mind, something that surprised Harry. Had he already come with the speech prepared? "That is the reason we need Mister Potter Junior here to come with us. He's emancipated under the law of first blood, to whom he applies as he still is of Scamander's heritage," James was about to retort, when the Goblin snapped again, "Of course he's a Potter, Mister Potter Senior, but unless Madam Bellatrix disowns him, he is also a Scamander. Now you may go and collect Mister Potter Junior later..." The goblin looked at the sky, "Considering the pile of paperwork to be done, tonight might be a better idea."

"Harry," James finally relented, looking at his son with a pleading look. "You can do this?"

"Ehm...I suppose." Harry nervously chuckled as he waved goodbye to his father, before following the Goblin who was swinging his axe to the crowd that parted quite quickly.

"Wizards." The goblin snorted, "They see steel and they cower." It added.

"I'm a wizard too," Harry deadpanned as he followed the creature towards the bank. He hadn't expected the goblin to be so familiar. Weren't they gruff and stern creatures to begin with? Things filled with sneers and nothing more?

"Well, maybe." The goblin grumbled, "But you're also an Honorary Goblin."

Harry rolled his eyes, before suddenly gulping down nervously and meekly asking.

"Since when?" He faltered a bit as he began to climb the steps of the bank.

"Well, since you put on the ring." The Goblin replied, "I'm Barbok by the way," the creature added, "And I sort of lied to that guy next to you."

'That guy' being his father, Harry was positively starting to lose the sense of the discussion with the goblin.

"Just needed to get you away from him, really...Chief Gringott flew in from the Americas to speak with you personally, while your accountant, Griphook, is currently still writing the paperwork." The Goblin chuckled, "Eight months to finalize everything...He'll probably go mad before finishing it."

The massive silver doors of Gringotts opened, and as he stepped through them he couldn't help but shiver. He entered the massive hall of the bank that he had visited years before, together with Professor Snape, when the memory hit him like a sledgehammer. The man had known of his identity from the beginning. Memory fragments clinked within his head as he could feel the flow restore itself bit by bit.

And then the Bloody Baron was gone, and a firm hand settled on Harry shoulder, a wand pointed at the side of his head.

"Obliviate."

Professor Snape was there, wasn't he?

Yes. He was there.

His parents, the Dursleys, they didn't berate him or call him freak. Those memories were false and he had known it, he had felt it, but he had never realized why or when...now he knew.

Now he remembered.

"Are you sure? Because there might never be another chance like this one, Harry...many might die because you didn't help." The silver haired wizard whispered, but Harry, albeit more slowly, still shook his head. "Then I am sorry," Albus murmured, "I am truly sorry to do it, but you must understand that it's for your own good, that this conversation actually never happened...I hope you will forgive me, my boy, eventually...but this is for the greater good."

"Work makes men free, said the Auschwitz sign at the gate's entrance."

"Albus! You can't be serious!" Severus' head suddenly snapped towards the Headmaster, "You're..."

"Just remember my words, Harry...you are the son of James and Lily Potter, and your sister is Lillian Potter...Apologies." And then Dumbledore's wand was already in front of his eyes, so fast he hadn't even seen it coming.

And then another chunk came in place as he felt his legs give in and his head ache. He felt the world spin as he took one more step, the dam of memories breaking and splintering as they all poured out one after the other. He remembered. He recalled. The chunks gave way to a pattern and a mosaic so beautiful it made him retch in disgust. He laughed at the sheer sadness of it in his mind, as with a final, mentally heard clink, it all connected.

Dumbledore was going to die.

He'd kill him himself.

He'd butcher him like the most worthless pig that the world had ever seen. He'd feast on his blood and tear his soul to oblivion. He'd do that, and he'd do it again and again. Heck, he'd find a way to bring him back just so he could kill him again.

It took him a moment to open his eyes and blink. He wasn't in the hall of Gringotts any longer, but he had been laid down on a comfortable sofa within an office. There was a giant glass desk, with what seemed like a really important Goblin smoking a thick cigar sitting in his armchair and puffing smoke in and out of his mouth on

the other side of it. There were shelves filled with documents, and to the side of the room stood another goblin, frantically writing on parchment with two quills by his side copying his every word.

"Mister Wyllt, you're finally awake." The very important looking goblin commented, putting out his cigar and standing up. He winced as he slowly sat down on the sofa, gingerly touching his forehead. He groaned in pain as his head began to pound as if a hammer was beating him repeatedly on his skull. Even the soft light of the room was sort of blinding for him, but it soon passed. "I am Gringott, owner of Gringotts' banks all over the world." The goblin added, before pointing a long hairy finger towards the other goblin, "That is Griphook, your accountant."

"Wyllt?" He gurgled out, "Wasn't it..."

"Potter?" The goblin snorted, "We are Goblins, Mister Wyllt. We know how to be subtle: when we saw you did not publicize your true relations or blood ties, we understood and found a way to call you privately. There is much to discuss, and little time. This letter was meant to be delivered by owl to your person." A thick parchment appeared in the hands of Gringott, coming out from within the goblin's suit's inner pocket probably. The creature handed it over with a slight smirk, and as Harry raised an eyebrow and unfolded the scroll, he began to read.

"Greetings Duke Wyllt,

Gringotts International wishes to congratulate you for having entered the Goblin Silver level of account privileges. You will be entitled to the following amenities..." He skipped through what seemed to be a salesman call, meaning he actually had to turn the scroll three more times since apparently being a 'Goblin Silver' level meant he also did get official Gringotts' toothpaste and cookies once a week.

"This letter applies to inform your grace of the need for a meeting to discuss matters inherent your inheritance of most Noble House of Wyllt, Slytherin, Gryffindor, Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff, plus various and eventual houses and died off cadet branches. Gringotts bank has already proceeded, as per law 239183-BY-G043, inherent to emancipation through first blood, to have the trace on your wand removed." He didn't have his original wand to begin with, but he did mentally file to never, ever, ask for the laws of the Gringotts bank.

"Any time of the day of any day of the week of any week of the month of any month of the year of any year of the decade is acceptable to us." He actually had to read this single sentence again. Writing a mere 'We are at your disposal at any time' was apparently not how the goblins did this.

"Furthermore since the merging of your vaults is still in completion, an approximate estimate of your accounts is given at the end of the document, however please notice that it is by no mean final. If there is a need for a particular deed or contract to be delivered a copy of, please do not hesitate to ask us, for we utmost love to serve such a noble person as you." Damn if they were laying it all thickly. So what, he had inherited some money and...a title, it wasn't as if it changed anything, was it?

"There is a vast amount of correspondence awaiting your answer in your private office here at Gringotts, we have taken the liberty of tidying off thy grace's rooms in an event of..." He blinked. Wait. What correspondence!? What office!? What rooms!? He looked around the room he was in, was this his office?

"Extra-curricular activities of Durmstrang have to be financed..." He began to pale as he kept on scrolling, by now more than a meter thick of parchment was laid on the floor, much to the shock and surprise of the rest of the room. "Hogwarts board of governors is to be suspended for return of line of founder's blood..." They couldn't be... "Nurmengard's propriety extends..." He nearly choked there and then, Grindelwald had an entire mountain! He had bought an entire mountain like in one of those James Bond films where the evil guy digs a secret base beneath some really big rock of sorts... "The surrounding seas of Azkaban and the binds of the Dementors..." Well, that one he could understand, really. "Private islands along the North Sea, belonging to the lord of Azkaban. Private grounds in Russia, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, France, England, Spain..." And the list went on. He was actually starting to chuckle by then...but it wasn't over.

"Wealth amount in Galleons: "

He froze.

Nine...Nine thousand millions?

He had approximately nine thousand millions galleons in his vault?
Or as the Americans put it: nine billions?

He...He had...He...He was...how much gold did Fort Knox have to begin with? He had more! He had frigging more gold than Fort Knox! He was...

He wasn't rich. He wasn't even filthy rich. He was bloody damn well the richest man in the whole damn wizardry planet and that...

"Which brings you ninety-seventh on the scale of richest wizards in the world." Meant he was ninety-seventh?

Now, that stilled him. Sure, he was rich...but apparently he wasn't the richest in the world. He could actually think of a lot of good reasons for it. For one thing, the vaults had probably never been used before, so if the money hadn't been invested, it hadn't given back interests: it could be a reason to begin with. Then there was inflation. Then there was the fact that probably the others had successful businesses working and were actually earning more...it could also be that a lot of wizards held both muggle and real accounting. Weren't a lot of rich muggle people in the two digit billion things to begin with?

And this was his wealth, meaning it could probably only yield few gold coins and then priceless ancient artifacts of old. Maybe there was even Arthur's crown in the middle of the vault, or something like Lancelot's armor or stuff like that too. He was still rich, but...but he turned his gaze to the rest of the people in the room, who were looking at him with bated breath, in wait. Gringott was smiling, while Griphook, his accountant goblin, was taking a much needed break.

"I'm...a Duke?"

"It is a little, mostly unknown fact that Merlin and Arthur were half-brothers." Gringott replied with a small smile. "Technically speaking, the crown of England should..."

Betrayers. Betrayed. They betrayed. Merlin too. Rowena...betrayed.

And for once, Harry understood why Salazar had been so angry in his dreams. He understood why the man had been bitter and

angered. The woman had betrayed him. He didn't know if the two had actually married or something like that, but Salazar Slytherin had been betrayed, and that had apparently been enough to send him on a rampaging spree across the world.

"So, I'm a Duke." He deadpanned. "Duke Wyllt." He added carefully, letting the name roll off his tongue. "I wonder..." He remembered his father's words and a small smile crept on his face, "Would it be possible to keep my identity a secret?"

As Gringott's smile bloomed into a sharp fang-like and feral smirk, Harry knew that he had said something extremely right.

"Of course Mister Wyllt," the goblin nodded, "You need to meet with the Queen to have your noble status acknowledged, but we can set an appointment in private."

Harry blinked.

"The...queen?" His throat parched up.

"Of course," Gringott chuckled, "But that can wait for when all the...paperwork, is done." His eyes gestured in a sort of meaningful gaze towards Griphook, who grumbled something in a strange language before resuming his writing. "And unless you sign on the property contracts, we have no need to warn the ministry of...changes in ownerships of various businesses."

"So until I sign everything," he gestured towards the other goblin that was diligently swearing and writing at the same time, "I can avoid others knowing about this?"

"Yes." Gringott nodded, "And in the event of people snooping around, worry not." The grin was sort of sadistic now, "We have our ways to deal with them."

He smiled back, and brought his right hand forward. The goblin brought his own and shook his, and while Harry had but seen it done in films and cartoons, or read of it in books, he finally understood why people actually said that sentence out loud with a smug face.

"It's going to be a pleasure doing business with you, Mister Gringott."

"Likewise Mister Wyllt, likewise." Gringott replied with the same smug tone.

It took Harry a moment before stopping the handshake, and finally frowning slightly. "I know it might sound rude to ask now," He began hesitantly, "But what is it you seek to gain? I doubt the owner of Gringotts would personally come and talk to me unless there was something I could do."

"Wonderful," Gringott acknowledged his question, "You are very keen, and that is an excellent quality when dealing with business proposals." The goblin added, before finally turning to move back towards the chair, gesturing for him to take another seat by his side. "Let us say that we have high hopes for what you can do with your...interesting pedigree."

Harry stood up from the sofa, before slowly making his way to the offered seat, which he took. As he sat down, a parchment was displayed in front of him.

"In this scroll are a number of things that reside in your properties that belong to the Goblin nation. Some of them are priceless treasures that Gringott would truly like to have back."

He began to scan through the parchment, reading about various trinkets, swords and even earrings. There was surprisingly little on the paper, even though something did catch his interest.

"The sword of Gryffindor?" He asked curiously.

"Ah, yes." The goblin nodded, "To goblins, what we forge is ours. The sword was loaned to Godric Gryffindor to battle a Hydra, because the sword was the only one able to sustain Fiendfyre within itself. It was never returned, and the subsequent wizard was brought the goblin nation to let it go. It is rightfully yours by wizard laws, but we would like it back..."

He sort of realized what he was actually doing only then.

He was dealing with a treaty. He was actually making a treaty with a goblin bank, but at the same time he was dealing with the goblin nation. He was...he was writing history. Strangely, he didn't feel the

bit important. It did come to a surprise that these trinkets hadn't been returned though, if they really belonged to the goblins.

"Why weren't they returned beforehand?" He asked curiously.

"Because many lie within Hogwarts, or in private properties of other wizard families who refused to give back what was rightfully ours without...monetary compensation." The goblin snarled.

This...

A metaphor rose to the front of his head before he could stop it.

This was like post the war, when the raided museums found themselves missing art pieces that had gone elsewhere. Many weren't given back, considered spoils of war. To him it didn't matter, because he had no need for them, but what if by mistake he gave back a 'Mona Lisa' to the goblins? He was sort of like the director of the Louvre, having to choose between giving back all of his possessions that weren't done by Frenchmen to their respective nations.

It was after all the right thing to do, but it didn't make it something the other Frenchmen would like.

Still, he knew the goblins were helping him precisely because of that, and that...that actually made him smile.

"You had me from the moment you agreed to help me, right?" He offhandedly remarked.

"Why, mister Wyllt, there is this interesting Goblin proverb that states," and here Gringott took a moment to smirk, "Never make deals you can't close in your favor."

"And how would you get all these...things back, without alerting the ministry of me?" He asked curiously.

"Well, we are cataloguing everything that rightfully belongs to an older and more...pure family." Gringott commented sagely. "Said family will then gift back to the goblin nation what belongs to them as a sign of good will."

"And maybe the goblin nation will find it in her interests to keep friendly contact with said...pure family?" Harry hazarded out with a sort of teasing tone: if the goblin took it wrong he could pass it as a joke and hope for the best...He was surprised when the goblin actually nodded.

"That is the interest of the Goblin nation, mister Wyllt." The goblin commented. "You must know this: we are shrewd businessman, but before that we are something more." His tone became serious, "We are extremely revengeful to those who betray our trust. The wizardry world has broken our trust so many times we can no longer hope for reconciling with it...but with you, the Goblin Nation wishes to give the wizardry world a final, last chance." The creature's tone became filled with a sort of mixture of determination and...maybe a flicker of hope? Yet it soon tinged with anger and hatred, assuming some sort of final threat form. "Do not delude us."

He gulped down nervously, as he hesitantly nodded again.

"Good, then Mister Wyllt, or should I say Mister Potter, you should sign these papers..." The goblin smiled as he delivered a few stacks of scrolls.

"Signature in blood, do not worry if it stings a bit," Gringott added, "And do sign you off as Duke Wyllt, it is for the best."

He bit his lip as he began to write off his new signature on the papers, the back of his right hand sporting slow but sure scars that tinged red for a moment, before returning the normal color of skin. The ink came out red from the quill, and as he went through the various parchments, reading each and every one of them, he couldn't help but wince as the pain became progressively unbearable.

He had to use subtlety for this. This 'pain' was nothing compared to the consequences should he fail to be subtle. He actually thought about what would happen, should he come out in the open with who he was and what he had. Already he could imagine the uproar of people yelling and screaming that the staff of Merlin and the sword of Arthur were meant to be in a museum, or that he was just a child that should not touch them.

He could imagine the twinkling Dumbledore repeatedly passing laws to limit his strength and his power, forcing him to give up wealth and properties in some sort of convoluted way to hold him in check. He didn't know how the wizard would do it, but he knew well enough that it was something the old man could do. They had fabricated a forgery to make him a hero, and used it to entrap him. The problem was that he actually held a heroic title, and quite a bit of power himself...but it wouldn't be enough.

If the tools of the trade were more than enough to defeat anyone, then there wouldn't have been the defeat of Grindelwald who wielded the Elder Wand. Salazar wouldn't have succumbed. Merlin wouldn't have ended up...in whatever way he had ended up there it still made him flinch.

Even great men held weaknesses, exploitable ones. Arthur had lost to his son, hadn't he? There was nothing called 'invincibility'. Even Voldemort had failed and had been defeated by Lillian. In the end, not all fights had to be done frontally or directly.

Some things required subtlety, cunningness. Some things needed a certain amount of cool head. He needed to remove Dumbledore from his seat of power at Hogwarts, and he knew that the man was held there but by a snippet, a bare thread. With him out of Hogwarts, the castle would inevitably fall to him who was its rightful heir.

The stronghold of magic in Britain would be his.

And from there...

He didn't know.

What does one do, once the end of the road is reached?

He flinched as the final drops of blood signed the final document, and with a bright smile from Gringott, he was once more guided towards the exit. Outside of the bank, anxiously waiting for him was his father, who was sporting quite the glare. Harry had entered the bank a bit after lunch hour: the night sky was already coming around in full glory, and the cold breeze made his skin shiver lightly.

"Harry!" The man snapped, "What happened?" He asked not to him, but to the goblin to his side.

"Mister Potter Junior required a private vault," the goblin commented, "And documents had to be signed. We at Gringotts apologize for the delay."

"Five hours." James deadpanned. "And you prevented me from entering." He narrowed his eyes.

"Privacy is always ensured here at Gringotts." The goblin sagely nodded. "Mister Potter Junior," the creature added towards him, "May you wreck righteous fury upon the heathens."

He raised an eyebrow, before turning to his father who was looking at him perplexed.

"And worry not, it's a Goblin's sentence for 'May gold always flow'." Harry merely smiled nervously, as he was yanked with a bit of strength by his father and brought away from the bank.

"Ouch." He groaned as he felt the telltale sign of apparition, before landing with his knees on the ground in front of the Potter's mansion.

"Your mother was worried." James snapped at him actually angry, for once. "What did I tell you? And you can't even follow it through on the first day." The man shook his head strongly. "Anyway, get inside and go straight to bed! No dinner for you tonight."

He was about to retort.

He was actually about to let out a scathing and utterly venomous remark of pure unbridled fury and hatred, and yet he did not.

He just meekly nodded and sort of nervously walked inside, up the stairs, and in his room, closing the door behind him and laying with his face down on the bed's sheets.

The best way to fool everyone.

It had come to him in that precise instant in which James had 'disciplined' him.

It was so obvious, wasn't it?

So pretty damn obvious he was a fool for not having thought about it before.

He just had to act like a child.

Duke Wylt could take care of the adult stuff.

He was Harry Potter, and he had very important Hogsmeade weekends to go to once school started. Duke Wylt had an army to form, a reign to conquer and a change to make in the entire wizardry society.

Harry Potter was going to love going to Honeydukes and making loveable and caring friends at Hogwarts.

The sheer sugary thought made him mentally retch out in revulsion, accompanied by his wand's slight warming up. Well, at least his wand and he were on the same wavelength...albeit he'd have to tone it down...or maybe not?

He groaned. What if people wanted him to duel at school? What if they looked to see if he really was a hero or not? He had to act like some sort of celebrity, or could he pass off as an antisocial guy with few good friends?

And what about Hermione? And Lillian? What of his parents and Dumbledore?

Could he actually do it? Feign being a child?

He was a child, wasn't he? How difficult could it be to act like one for Merlin's beard!?

Christmas was coming.

He shuddered at the thought of having Christmas with the Potters, but more than that...

He truly didn't know if he was up to it.

Could he really do it?

Could he really fight and tear apart an entire system? Could he really bring down an intricate bundle of ties and politics? The metaphor of Alexander and him cutting the bundle with a sword came to him...but this wasn't a metaphor. If he did this, if he actually fought back, people were going to die. No change can come through peace.

Change was violent. He had seen that much. Change came when one side wanted something different, and the other side didn't always want to do so. That was change. There would be blood once more.

There would be broken bones, torn limbs, caved in skulls. Fire would burn and screams would litter the air...speaking of screams, he still had to do something about the Dementors.

He absentmindedly brought his right hand forward, gesturing in the air to nothing in particular. When the bright shower of gold and flames erupted as Sophie gently dropped on his chest, he smiled bitterly. On the plus side, he could call his phoenix without saying her name out loud.

On the negative side, he didn't know how long she'd keep being his with the way things would go.

The phoenix gently sang to him, and he blinked as he let the song take him. It was sort of wonderful: soothing and calm. He closed his eyes as he imagined a whirlwind of fire circling around a golden globe. There were no screams, no agony. There was no pain and no fighting to be done. It was peace. It was wonderful. He felt it brush against his fingertips, and when he finally touched it...

He opened his eyes at the sight of the horde of Dementors in Durmstrang, wailing and crying their tears to the skies themselves. The clouds were pitch black and the thunder loomed, lightning fell in the sea around the sinking complex. He could see in the horizon the British ship holding themselves at bay, and he could feel the complex calling to him, praying to him, whispering to him.

He could feel it. He could understand it.

It was with a surprisingly clear mind, that he realized what he had touched.

He had touched magic.

And magic had touched him back.

"So this is the reason." he whispered to himself, Merlin's staff humming as it grew back to its normal size, being now held by his left hand. "The wicked present shall rise." The Dementors twirled into what seemed like a veritable murder of crows, albeit with their gaunt appearance and high wailed shrieks. "This is what has to be done." His wand morphed, back into the form of Excalibur.

"The punishment was paid." He muttered as Sophie screeched in his ear. "For centuries they waited." He gritted his teeth as he felt his hand move. "Complete the circle. Free the hunt." He groaned as the phoenix sang, holding the Dementors at bay. Their bony hands were nearing him, completely surrounding a sort of golden circle around him, formed by Sophie. "Free them and uphold Merlin's will." He fell down on one knee. "Their suffering must end."

The gnarled staff of Merlin grew spikes and thorns, wrapping itself around each and every one of the Dementors, and then the flaming sword of Arthur burned through the thorns, through the Dementor's skin, through their skeletal appearance.

And like a massive burning tree, their screams finally ended in a shower of dust and ashes.

Durmstrang wailed and trembled, its body cracking and the castles splintering. He felt the cornerstone creaks and whines. He heard the snap of the chains and the screams of the portraits. He felt the magic wash over the area, as with a final push the cornerstone broke.

The magic did not simply disperse, but travelled along a predetermined path that Harry knew. He knew it because the phoenix knew it. Sophie merely trilled strongly, as with powerful flaps she began to fly away from the falling complex of ice that wasn't Durmstrang, but just an addition to the school.

The real Durmstrang was the boat, after all.

And the price for its return had been the complex itself.

The complex filled with blood and pain was sinking, as the ship forgotten and lost rose from the depths of the sea, its frame repairing itself as the sails began to billow under the wind.

Harry landed on the deck of Durmstrang, the massive ship groaning under its first voyage in the depths of the sea after such a long time. At the helm, he saw a ghostly figure with a wide trimmed hat, as ghost sailors walked around the deck and the ropes. He didn't even look surprised when he walked towards the captain.

"So." He muttered, standing to the side of the ghost. "Who are you?"

"I am Oleg of Novgorod." The Ghost whispered, "First Headmaster of Durmstrang."

"And you speak English?" Harry deadpanned, no longer even surprised by the turn of events. He felt strangely at peace, as he sailed with Sophie on his shoulder trilling a happy tune.

"There was nothing better to do but learn, imprisoned as we were within the cornerstone of that pathological place." The ghost grumbled. "I was a seer and a king, and yet my death was met by treachery...but that is the past, isn't it? What year are we in?"

"Nineteen-ninety-three," he replied calmly, "When were you imprisoned? And by whom?"

The ghost chuckled.

"It was the year nine-hundred and twelve," he commented, "for a hundred years I refused the proposals of Salazar Slytherin, and for a hundred years I avoided his ploys." The ethereal figure's face turned mournful, "I lost many brave men, and yet I never confronted him." He shook his head. "In the end, my death came by the hand I had least suspected."

"Whose?" He asked perplexed.

"Helga Hufflepuff."

He blinked.

The ghost looked sadly ahead, turning the helm with his ghostly hands as if he was solid, a sort of wailing whistle beginning to echo around the ship. Banks of fog rose to cover the ship, and with a sharp tug, the ship took to sinking beneath the sea's surface. Yet the fog surrounded them like a sort of thick embrace, preventing the water from pouring in.

"H...How?"

"A poisoned cup," the man chuckled, "Made of gold it seemed..." The ghost whispered, "But Thestral bones composed its frame, and the horse of Death cannot be scorned in such a way."

"You didn't warn..."

"I did." The Ghost acknowledged, "But as a ghost I was ignored. They claimed somebody had poisoned the cup, or Salazar had bit me with a venomous snake. The true culprit was left unscathed, and the cup was stolen before anyone could examine it."

Harry merely nodded, before turning to look at Sophie who trilled in response.

"Yes, I've got it." He rolled his eyes. "Sophie asks if you're interested in being the Headmaster at Interim of Durmstrang."

"I have nothing else to do." The ghost replied, "There is only the choice of here or beyond: you cannot choose again."

"Good." He whispered, "If...any ghost wants to be freed, they are of course able to go where they please." He added as Sophie hastily head-butted him gently.

The ghost smiled and nodded.

"Well then, you know my name but I don't know yours," the ghost chuckled.

"Oh, that's easy." Harry replied calmly.

"I'm Wyllt, Duke Wyllt."

And with those words, Sophie brought him back into his bedroom. Just in time, because the door opened not a second later to admit his mother with a food tray. Harry nervously smiled at his mother, realization dawning on him that he was still wielding his staff and sword, when the woman merely looked at him with a glazed gaze.

"Put them away Harry." She whispered. "I won't tell James or Dumbledore." She added carefully.

As soon as he had done that, the woman sat by his side of the bed and took a deep breath.

"Listen, Harry..." She murmured, clenching her hands tightly, "I...I want to know something."

He nodded warily, his gaze travelling towards the window, Sophie who had meanwhile flapped her wings and gotten on a perch, and the door.

"Did...Did my sister mistreat you?"

He bit his tongue from answering with a no.

Nobody knew that.

Nobody was meant to know that he recalled and remembered.

"I...I don't want to talk..."

"Please." Lily all but begged him, and finally he had to relent.

"I...There was the...cupboard, and the...the locks..." He trembled, or faked so at least. Sophie was looking at him with some sort of mirth in her eyes...so what if he was a bad actor? The ruddy bird could have warned him before transporting him elsewhere to free the Dementors!

Lily hugged him tightly a second later, making him wince.

"I'm sorry." She whispered in tears. "I'm...I should have...I'm sorry." His...mother...was crying.

Mother.

He felt his heart twist. He felt it clench and pain. As he returned the hug quietly, he couldn't help but feel like the worst scum the earth had ever birthed.

Never mind the fact he had apparently freed the Dementors from some sort of excruciating punishment and done the right thing...

What was easy and what was right, after all, was never the same thing.

Author's notes

Longer than normal chapter.

Now let us give a nice, heartwarming cheerful clap of hands for the title of the next 'book'.

'Harry Wyllt and the Path to the Crown.'

Which is self-explanatory.

Yeah, right, because all my titles are so easy to understand.

chuckles grimly

People wish to know of Morgana-Perenelle? Be forewarned! Thy questions will be answered...but you might not like the answer at all!

The next one is the last chapter of book III, and then we begin book IV! (In 'medias res' as the Latin say)

And...Yeah, Helga wasn't a nice lady. And Rowena was an adulterer. And we finally meet the first Headmaster of Durmstrang.

Wikipedia is your friend, if you wish to know more on some of the myths and legends going around.

I actually kept Harry's pov for the entire chapter. Damn I'm good.

The Dementors' true identity and origin isn't openly stated, but I said a single word stressed out (coupled with myths in England) that

should truly give you the answer. (For more hints, just look at the Witcher, and...well, the end of the second game's guys...you know, those in the movie...the guys that hunt.) For why they were punished, the real relations between Arthur, Merlin, the actions of the past with Salazar, Godric and Helga's true morality, Rowena's ploys or sufferance (who knows at this point?) Durmstrang's future and the fact that Harry appears to be speaking with his phoenix...

Well, see ya in the following chapters! (and really, this is just the inch of the inch of the entire plot-line. We still have Russia, Greece, America, the Azt...shouldn't have said that, oh boy it's going to be a long ride!)

Heinrich Grindelwald and the Tide of Darkness

Chapter 28

Christmas came with the snow. White flakes that flew down with the intensity of a blizzard. Harry blearily opened his eyes and slowly dressed up in his usual Durmstrang attire. He rather preferred the comfort of the reinforced leather than that of the robes. It didn't actually matter in defending against spells, since they passed through cloth with ease, but he rather liked the feeling of having more ease of movement with his trousers without the troublesome robe's hem.

He washed his face, hot water finally waking him up completely as he passed his wet hand through his now long hair. It reached to his shoulders, giving him a sort of effeminate look. In truth he believed it contrasted nicely with his pale skin and dark green eyes. Once his eyes had been a bright green color, but now they looked as if he had covered them in a slight dose of mud, making them a darker tone. He knew the reason of course: there was little he didn't know when it came to himself.

Evil magic always leave a sign. Not 'Dark' magic, because Dark was just another term for obscure or unknown. Evil magic, on the other hand, was different. It reviled in pain and sufferance and was born of blood and hatred. The Unforgivables entered the category, but they weren't the top of the crop. Sure, a curse unblockable and that kills is evil, a curse that makes you feel pain without way to mitigate it is evil, a curse that takes away your free will is evil...but they aren't true evil.

Truly evil spells were those that forced an individual to feast upon the blood of his newborn child to survive, forcing him to writhe in pain as he had to make the choice. There were curses that didn't seem to do anything, but instead slowly rotted away the inner organs of a wizard when a word was spoken...and it didn't matter where or from whom. Evil wasn't however only spells for pain. It was also for egoism and egocentrism. Spells to suck the happiness out of a person, spells to bring forth gain at the cost of another, spells to live healthier by sacrificing the health of someone else.

There were spells that seemed innocent at first, like one that made you find money in your pocket. The money came from the purses

and the wallets of those nearby however, and people who found themselves without money ended up always committing suicide. It was part of the cycle. Working to benefit others or working to benefit one's own self rarely could coexist.

Still, it was Christmas, and he really shouldn't have been thinking about the nature of evil or good magic on the day that meant to be 'holy' and 'cheerful'.

It was a little known fact that Santa Claus never dressed in red, and that it was just an invention to sell more. For what it mattered, the big thing didn't exist to begin with. Unless of course it was a wizard who was willing to age a lot in order to use a time-turner extensively for a single night. He kind of blinked. It did sort of make sense that a single wizard would be as moronic as to waste an entire 'hundred' or more years using a time turner to relive a single night and give gifts to people. It made sense because it was so imbecilic he could see someone doing it.

The Christmas tree nearly blinded him, as he finished descending the stairs and entered the 'small' room that held it. There were golden props and stars everywhere, gold and red being the principle colors of the tree in pure Gryffindor fashion. He had been kind of surprised to see a few blue and bronze balls and stars hanging, but then again it was probably some sort of tradition.

There were gifts beneath the tree, quite a bit to say the truth. He bit his lip before turning towards the armchair in the room. He sat down there and began to calmly read a book near him, waiting for the rest of the house to wake up. It didn't take much. He heard the noises of water running and people moving, before James Potter came down first. The man tended to go for a jog every morning around the house, but this time around he apparently hadn't planned for it.

Lily Potter followed a moment later, and then with a sort of high squeaking exclamation 'It's Christmas, Hermione!' He knew that Lillian and Hermione would come down soon. He was actually amused nobody had realized he was sitting in the armchair. The smile on his lips died down a bit when he stared at the disheveled form of Hermione's grumpy face. The girl had apparently begun to be lax again. Then again, he was apparently the only one who had dressed in his clothes for Christmas morning. Everyone else was in their pajamas and their housecoats.

He quietly got up from the armchair as they entered the room with the Christmas gifts.

"Happy Christmas Harry!" Lillian exclaimed as he barreled to hug him.

"Merry Christmas." Hermione added a moment later, tightening her housecoat quickly and averting her gaze for a moment. He awkwardly smiled back, before acknowledging the holiday's salute with his own.

"Good morning." He nodded.

"How nice of you to wait for us," Lily sweetly said with a bright smile, "Lillian would have already opened them all."

The girl childishly pouted back. A few weeks in the Potter's mansion and things were taking a turn for normality. He supposed he was the problem: always waiting for something bad to happen. Yet this was Christmas, normal and childish Christmas with gift-giving and happy singing. There were carols to be sung and eggnog to drink, the end of the year was just around the corner and everyone was meant to be happy.

A wider amount of bullshit he had never seen before. Maybe he had developed a cynic streak, but when it all came down...he didn't actually want to open his gifts. What would he find in there of use for his survival?

Maybe that was in the end the problem: he was thinking on 'survival' terms. Opening the first of his gifts, a warm and strangely big scarf with blue and bronze colors, he made a smile towards Hermione, who merely smiled back. He had given the girl a book entitled 'Houdini's escapes' hoping that the next time around the girl would be able to 'save herself'. Lillian's gift was a pair of gloves of matching color with his scarf. The two girls had probably bought him gifts together.

He earned himself another hug from his sister, when the girl opened up her gift and found a pair of reinforced bracers for Quidditch. Those were just a bit spelled to absorb some of the strength of the

attacks of the bludgers...technically illegal in official matches, but what Lillian didn't know wouldn't hurt her.

He was surprised to find out that Gringotts had delivered him his package of 'Goblin Silver' related benefits in a comfortable looking metal box. With a sixteen digits combination that apparently was his new code. He pushed the heavy metal block aside deciding to open it later, and then looked at a personal gift from Gringott himself.

It was a book made with metal foils for paper, and a bronze cover that held etched upon it the goblin's tongue equivalent of 'Of Axes and Blades, a guide to butchering your enemies'.

Either it meant that, or it actually was 'Of lovers and friendship, a guide to making cozy dinners'. Why axes could be translated also as lovers and blades as friendship wasn't much difficult to imagine. The 'Butchering' and 'Making cozy' were more difficult, but not completely out of question. Why enemies were translatable as 'dinners'...he really didn't want to go and open that particular can of worms.

He hadn't actually learned the Goblin's tongue. It just came to him as his hands touched the surface of the book, like if some sort of translation spell of some type had been cast upon his body, which brought the question of when the goblins could have done something like that.

Probably when he had fainted.

Well, the Goblins knew when to be subtly, he had to concede that much...and knowing their tongue made it easy to understand them when they wanted to write to him or speak to him. Actually, when they did send to him his account status...it was in Gobbledegook. He did burn the papers off after having replied to them, just to make it easier not to leave any trace behind.

Duke Wylt had no 'active' businesses, only 'passive' things that did not require his attention. Considering most of the vaults had been inactive for a long time, it made sense: if you can't control a business, what do you keep it around for? The Goblins did get shares in muggle businesses to keep the dividends in however, and it actually made him cringe at the thought of somebody asking to see what was in his vault.

Luckily neither James nor Lily had asked.

He just hoped their forgetfulness would continue.

He was surprised when the next gift he opened came from a certain Fleur Delacour. He had completely forgotten about the girl, but the girl apparently hadn't.

"Englishman as you are, you are terrible in making social calls. I wish for a rematch, but until then I hope this book will help you with your fiery nature." He widened his eyes as the book that came out was strangely warm to the touch. The title, written in gold, was 'Of fiendish, mortal and heavenly fires, a guide to the world of Pyro.'

There was a brief twinge of disbelief, at the thought of someone remembering him long enough to actually think about giving him a gift. He'd rather expect Hermione to have struck a friendship with the Delacour girl: she had gone to Beauxbatons far longer than him after all. Even Lillian would have been a better thoughtful choice to deliver a gift to. The fact he had received a gift...maybe it was because of his now growing fame?

He didn't want to pass off as rude. He'd have a gift owed and sent back to her...problem being what he could gift an older girl: perfume, maybe?

The gift of Albus Dumbledore was ignored. He didn't actually feel the need to put on a 'curse protection' hat that looked every bit as cursed as the things it was meant to protect him from. Maybe he could deliver back a packet of lemon drops laced with laxative?

He chuckled at the thought as his father's gift came into view. A Firebolt. Was his Christmas going to be all about fire now? His mother instead had strangely gifted him with a glass jar of bezoars and a book on antidotes.

His breath hitched as he looked at the small greyish stones. It felt strange to gaze at those rocks and remember all sort of things except those rocks' utility during his first year. He remembered the philosopher's stone colored to resemble a bezoar. He remembered...

Disillusionment charms. That was all he had needed to enter the third corridor's door and avoid the rambling idiots that stood guard around the corridors calling themselves 'prefects'. A smell stopping charm and the three headed Cerberus hadn't even caught a sniff of him. A solar flare and the plant had broken its hold. A chess ensemble he had finished with ease. A troll, such a pitiful creature he had defeated with ease, knocking it around but not killing it. His passage was to be deftly and quick. He had to slither silently and quietly.

He was Henry Slytherin, and this...well, this was too easy. The black flames that sprouted on the door didn't even faze him, as he drank the correct flask after solving the childish riddle of such a stupid thing. Why place a riddle in the first place? Were they meant to protect the stone or just to let the thief have a happy and easy time?

He stared at the mirror of Erised beyond the door and groaned. The childish voice that wasn't his, but of his body unnerved him, but it had to do for the moment. So the stone wasn't there. It was to be expected but he still had to check. He turned around to leave, but at that moment he stilled.

He wasn't alone in the room any more.

He blinked. The fire of the chimney crackled normally, as he felt the gaze of everyone else in the room on him. Quickly, he came up with the only reason he would have somehow frozen over it.

"I...Thank you." He whispered hoarsely, "It's...First year I always had one in my pocket...it just..."

He knew he'd be hugged even before he had finished his sentence. He had to admit that his mother's hugs were...

No.

Not his mother's hugs. She wasn't his mother. She wasn't. He couldn't.

Or maybe...he wouldn't?

His mother was dead wasn't it? Wasn't it okay then to call someone else mom?

Was it okay then, to forget about the dead? Hadn't he done the very same thing first!? Hadn't he called Petunia his mother and Vernon his father, when he had been told his real parents had died!? Hadn't he been the first to betray what 'father' and 'mother' meant!?

Wasn't he in the end just a hypocrite!?

He was screaming at himself in his mind, trying to think what was right and what was wrong...but he couldn't. This wasn't a do or die choice. This wasn't a good or bad choice. This wasn't even a choice to begin with. There was nothing to choose. This was him, having to decide whether his parents were worthy of being called that by his mind or not.

Nobody would ever know the difference. This was just his choice, a personal one, one which no matter what side he took would lead to the same thing...and yet why did it feel so different?

Hermione Granger

She didn't know what to do. On one side she felt she was going at it a bit too strongly, but on the other side it was Christmas. And Christmas also meant mistletoe. Sirius Black had actually come over for dinner with the Potters, together with Remus Lupin and many other members of the family she hadn't even known of before. There were the Tonks, whose daughter Nymphadora was an auror...one that Harry apparently knew because he tensed at her sight and narrowed his eyes.

He always did that. Whenever someone he loathed or was displeased with appeared in his sight, he'd tense imperceptibly and narrow his eyes. His face wouldn't scrunch up, but his hand would always move as if to get his wand. Even if he just made some sort of 'patting' his left arm gesture. It was such a small set of movements many didn't realize it. She did however, and it sort of made her feel smug in knowing something about Harry that others didn't.

He was her knight in shining armor after all. The first time she had been saved by him had been at Hogwarts. The second time had been at Azkaban. The third time had been at Durmstrang. He had always been there, fighting for her. Even when she hadn't actually done anything to warrant this, he had helped her. She hadn't been

his friend the first time, even going as far as ignoring him outright. She clearly hadn't expected him to save her the second time: she was a muggle-born, a mudblood...she had no redeeming features and except for her bookworm attitude, she had little to offer. She was also an orphan and yet...yet he had come around and saved her again.

It didn't matter if some people decided to slander her back at Hogwarts, as long as she had her knight nearby nothing was unbearable. She didn't know why she felt some sort of heated glare forming on her face, or a scowl, when she looked at him slightly smile at his sister. She just knew he was her knight, not Lillian's. Lillian had it all. She had a family and friends and a nice future ahead of her as a pureblood.

Hermione Granger had barely her book smarts, and Harry had those to begin with. She knew it was a sort of impossible odd: there was no such thing as 'magic in the air' or 'love at first sight'. If Harry ignored her awkward attempts at flirting she just had to press on. Eventually he'd at the very least realize something was going on.

That thrilled and terrified her at the same time. She didn't know what she'd do if he'd refuse her badly. She'd probably be let down kindly, knowing him, but it would still hurt. That was why she had decided to speak with him under the mistletoe...maybe she could nudge him in the right direction.

It was maybe a bit of a Slytherin maneuver, but what else could she do? She wasn't going to use Amortentia, and certainly Imperius was out of the question. She was now nervously waiting, her back against the wall next to the backyard door that gave onto a white and snowing landscape. The blizzard had stopped and a beautiful night sky had taken its place, giving out a breathtaking view.

She was wearing a heavy winter robe, with a warming charm cast over it. Her breath was condensing in small puffs of white smoke, and as she stood there she just hoped he'd be over the door soon...and at the same time she dreaded the thought.

He arrived a few seconds later sporting a sort of small grin she knew he reserved only to his friends. She took a deep sharp breath as he took the last steps down the three stairs that brought his feet to land

on the snow. The crunching noise of the snow being pressed mixed with the natural noises coming from the chilly wind.

His eyes, dark because of the natural lack of direct light in them, looked around for a moment before settling on her. He smiled at her, and walked closer.

"You wanted to speak with me, Hermione?" He asked her, his voice displaying a slight harsh tone as his eyes flicked to the left and to the right, as if expecting someone else to come around. His gaze then stood on the backyard door he had closed, before moving quietly to where the various windows were. His wand was out after a second, and a small muffled word 'Mufflatio' came out from his mouth.

"What spell is it?" She asked him, trying to bid her time. Maybe he'd naturally catch on the fact that there was mistletoe hanging on top of them, or maybe he wouldn't. She didn't know whether she should or shouldn't tell him. It was...complicated.

"Mufflatio?" He retorted calmly, raising an inquisitive eyebrow in surprise. Maybe he expected her to know it too: she felt flustered at that. She was clearly losing on the book smart part. If she lost that too...then how was she ever going to be useful to Harry? Or even manage to catch his attention?

"Everyone else will just hear random buzzing conversation." He replied calmly. "Snape invented it." He added quietly, "Gave me a book with it in the first year...he said it was my mother's," the boy snorted, "It was his."

"Why would he do that?" She asked him curiously. She hadn't much of a thought on Professor Snape: he was a potion teacher at Hogwarts, he hated Gryffindors but except for that the man hadn't left a lasting impression on her. Apparently it had instead done so on Harry, who merely scoffed and shrugged.

"Who knows: it's not like I'm going to ask him." He added in a low murmur, "Well...what did you want to talk with me about?"

She embarrassedly looked to the side, crossing her arms around her chest as she fought to find the right words. What could she say to come off as interested, but not overly so? She knew Harry would

probably even accept a 'pity date' with her. She knew the boy was just that kind. Yet she didn't want a pity date. She didn't want an illusion. She had to make things clear from the beginning, and...

"Whoever controlled me last year might still be around," she admitted quickly. "I might be in danger this year too."

"I'd like to see them try." Harry chuckled, "You know more now than you did last year, right?"

She smiled back at him nervously.

"Of course." She stiffened slightly as he took a step forward. Could he have seen the mistletoe? Was he going to kiss her now? The boy's right hand moved forward, and she couldn't help but closer her eyes and purse her lips forward slightly shivering in wait for...

The boy hugged her.

"It's going to be all right." He whispered to her ear. His voice harsh and strong, some sort of primal determination subtly echoing with each of his words. "I'll bring Dumbledore down. I'll conquer Hogwarts. I'll tear apart the Ministry...and I'll protect you."

Her eyes began to sting, as the need to cry suddenly overwhelmed her.

And cry she did.

Neville Longbottom

The New Year celebration was meant to bring forth nice thoughts. Good ideas for the future were expected. Thoughts on changing oneself and becoming better than the past were also desired. Of course, all that he hoped for was for the vacation to end. At least in summer he could be outside, or in the greenhouses to work on plants while his grandmother went for her usual tea with her friends.

In winter, he was forced to practically prance around being hexed and cursed and learning...or better yet being yelled at to learn spells. The wand he had positively hated him, and he knew it of course. The wand didn't like him and he didn't like his wand, but no: he was

the son of Frank and the son of Frank had to use Frank's wand because anything else was unacceptable.

It was only the last shreds of his love for his grandmother that prevented him from outright snapping the wand, yelling at the fool woman and heading off to Ollivander to grab a new one. It was that and the fact that his grandmother's face was positively scary to behold. Something really had to go eventually, but he just couldn't. His grandmother was everything he had left of his family, barring his uncle who was more of a dangerous psychopath than a real family member.

At least his grandmother hadn't yet resorted to flinging him out of windows to test his reflexes.

The fireworks of a muggle town nearby roared into the air, exploding like multi-colored lights. He was sitting at the edge of the Longbottom propriety, and this late at night he knew he wasn't going to be disturbed. His grandmother was already asleep, and he was actually meant to be...but it wasn't the first time he had broken his curfew.

In the silence of the forest, he felt at peace. There were no bickering grandmas or worrisome troubles. There was no sneering or yelling or screaming. There was no reminder of 'Frank would have done this better' or 'Frank would have dodged'. His father was dead and he wasn't. Frank apparently hadn't been all that great!

He winced at his mental exclamation, his back arching painfully from the time spent against the tree bark. For all of him being a dunce and a dimwit, he still knew how to climb trees. For all of his falling and knocking into people, he still knew how to hold his balance on a branch.

Did his grandmother praise him for that?

Of course not.

As the fireworks roared one last time, he heard a soft sound of snapping branches.

It came from beneath him, and as he cautiously peered downwards, he stilled his breathing.

Snakes.

A sea of snakes was slithering through the dark canopy of the grass of the forest, all seemingly moving towards some sort of particular destination. The next moment he heard a large cacophony belonging to birds, and while the thought crossed his mind that birds generally didn't fly at night, he couldn't help but wince as a veritable sea of them flew through the air.

It was just like when You-Know-Who had been defeated and owls had flown for days while comets had descended in the sky as a sign of partying wizards.

Only this time the entire forest seemed to be moving.

He didn't know how, but somehow the feeling that Harry was somehow involved stuck into his head.

When the last of slithering snakes had passed by, he took a deep breath. His grandmother had told him, having heard from Dumbledore that Harry would be coming back to school after the break. Without him, Hogwarts had in the end degenerated into a full blown out civil war between the houses.

With him coming back, it was only meant to be worse. Unless he managed to make the entire school form a single united block against him, everything would eventually come back to being tense, and then sparks would fly and war would erupt again. Two students had died already, and while he didn't particularly know Clearwater or the Slytherin boy, he still felt saddened that it had happened.

He silently dropped down from the tree and made his way back to the house where he slept. It wasn't home for him after all...just a place where he ended up being berated repeatedly. What really was his home was Hogwarts, and he'd protect her with his life, before letting anyone try and destroy the peace within its walls.

He was a Hufflepuff. He'd protect his own.

Draco Malfoy

The Hogwarts' train was happily trudging along the railway. Soon the castle would be in full view. His eyes were glazed over as he looked outside, at the extremely green pastures of the Scotland highlands. A few seagulls flew in the air, and for once Draco envied the stupid birds.

They didn't have to do anything complicated in all their lives: they just had to fly, find food, find shelter and then fly again. Their biggest worry was to take care of a couple of eggs, and even that was practically nothing more than glorified sitting. He hadn't seen Harry climb on the train, and he hadn't been in the mood to look for him through the various cars.

He still was thinking about being a stupid, yet free, bird when the door of the compartment slid open and a figure entered in. The girl huffed as she sat down in front of him. Her red hair dyed pale blond and her eyes looking at him with a soft expression. He brought his gaze towards her and groaned.

"Who was it?" He whispered, seeing the black bruise on her face, right where her right cheekbone stopped at the eye socket.

"Michael Corner." Ginny Malfoy, his adopted sister, whispered back to him. "I...I went to find Luna, but when I found what the other housemates were doing to her and...I tried to push him away first and..."

"And he hit you?" He asked in disbelief.

"Penelope Clearwater. Said it was to avenge her." She groaned slightly as he gently touched the sides of the bruise, before nodding to himself.

He bit his lower lip in thought, before muttering.

"It might hurt."

"Draco, if you can fix this please just get on with it." Ginny muttered.

He nodded, before pointing the tip of his wand towards the side of Ginny's cheek.

"Episkey." The words had barely left his mouth that Ginny's eyes shut close for a moment, as the girl breathed him sharply at the slight pain the spell delivered. The bruise slowly but surely receded, until nothing remained behind.

"Now tell me where Michael is," Draco commented calmly.

"No." Ginny shook her head. "They're all...they looked at us like we were...don't exacerbate the situation, Draco."

"I am not going to do nothing when that damn blood-traitor thinks he can just wallop my sister and walk away freely." Draco hissed.

"Then please plan. Don't go there with the wand blazing." She pleaded and he knew she had gotten him. He couldn't just act like a Gryffindor now, could he?

The door of his car opened a moment later, and Draco looked up to see yet another broken faced figure entering and sitting down. Luna Lovegood had been reduced even worse than Ginny...it was as if they had thought it funny to physically assault the girl and tear to bits most of her clothes. The girl was even wincing, and yet she was still managing a smile despite her bleeding lips and broken nose.

"For the love of Merlin!" Draco muttered in shock, "What the hell happened!?"

"N...Nothing." The blond haired Ravenclaw muttered. Her voice wasn't even the normal dreamy one, but a sadder one. "I just...I just thought they wanted to know that the Nargles...that the Nargles had to leave this year."

"And when I came in...they were hitting her." Ginny muttered. Her eyes were glazed and downcast. "I...I think they didn't take to losing well." She raucously chuckled. It was such a bitter laugh that even Draco felt his heart cringe. He quickly muttered a few Episkey also for the Ravenclaw girl, who simply made a half-attempted smile back at him.

Strangely, he had ended up having to learn healing spells during the vacations.

Well no, not actually such a strange thing, with the Dark Lord personally overseeing his 'training' so that he could hold a fighting chance to complete his...his plan.

He shivered and shuddered as he remembered just how the Dark Lord punished its people. His mother couldn't help him and neither could his father: both too busy doing something far away, in Greece. Ginny didn't know of the Dark Lord fortunately. She didn't know because she had spent her holidays with Tracey. He had practically begged the girl to take care of her and to not let her go back.

It had been a tight set of turns, but he had managed to keep the Dark Lord away from yet another potential victim. He knew he was delaying the inevitable, because next summer he didn't think he'd have a chance...but what else could he do?

He never had a sister before, and while Ginny Weasley was mostly her own person, it felt sort of nice to care about someone else without expecting to be used or treated badly. Sure, the girl had been a wreck for a long time but...It just felt nice to care and be cared for.

"Why did you tell them the...Nargles had to leave this year?" Draco finally found himself asking.

"Because he's back." Luna replied with a wistful look and her usual dreamy gaze.

"The King is back, and he'll kill them all." And then the blond girl smiled.

And he found himself suddenly widening his eyes as the door opened once more.

"Draco." The voice said amusedly.

His throat parched and his voice hitched. He looked at the figure standing tall in front of him, a silver cloak on his back and a wand holster beneath his left arm.

The Hogwarts robes already on, the black haired boy smiled at him, his shoulder-length hair covering the sides of his face. His dark green eyes looked at him with a slight focused gaze, before they

turned to the other two occupants and a brief spark of indignation overcame him at the sight of Luna's clothes' state.

"Ginny. Luna." He added carefully.

And Draco knew what he had to do even before he could truly think everything over. He knew that there was only one way out of his predicament and only one way through the thick and thin that would come from the half year remaining at Hogwarts.

He knew, and because he knew...

He kneeled in front of his King and swore his loyalty to him once more.

"My King."

And no two words held the same power as those simple ones.

Author's notes

And we finish book III!

Book IV begins with the next chapter.

Hip Hip

Hurray!

This chapter was mostly fluff, which is why I feel the need to explain, once more and in detail, that there are still NO shippings planned. And before you reach the conclusion of saying 'you practically dished it out' remember that no character is safe from death. (Except, maybe, Harry.)

As of now, the Characters that have died thus far are:

Penelope Clearwater.

Gregory Goyle.

Colin Creevey.

Ernest Macmillan.

Harry Wyllt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter 1

The train's whistle announced their arrival in the station with a sharp sound. The clouds were a starch grey color in the night sky, and as his steps took him down from the train he bitterly chuckled. Hogwarts' castle stood there, atop the hill so far away and yet so seemingly close. He could just open his hand and clasp around it, couldn't he?

The cricketing sounds of the insects reached his ears as step after step he walked towards the carriages. Hermione was with Lillian, Luna and Ginny. He had Draco walking behind him with a strange glint in his eyes. It was sort of amusing to see people part way where he walked. Step after step he took and the students moved aside to let him go.

Step after step upon the ground he took, and like Moses with the red sea, the crowd parted to the sides.

The Thestrals that pushed the carriages bowed to him and widened their wings, releasing eerie screams in the night sky. Their wails soon met with a far louder one, coming from the lake itself. The giant squid was peering with one of its enormous yellow eyes outside of the water, looking towards the station with curiosity as it bellowed its own wail in the sky. She didn't look as nothing more than a far away and dark figure, and yet she still looked every bit as terrifying as a Kraken would be.

He could actually see Filch look around in surprise at all of this, before shaking his head and screaming for the students to get to the carriages. He looked at the squib caretaker of Hogwarts and the man looked back at him, probably feeling his gaze. There was but a slight moment of tension, before he waved and mimicked the gesture for 'tea' and 'next day'. The man actually looked surprised, before smiling and nodding back.

"Move it you lot! On the carriages!" Argus yelled loudly, as the set of wails had probably scared senseless the students. Harry walked briskly towards the first carriage available, climbing on it together with Draco. Two students were already on it, and both stiffened at

his sight. One was a Hufflepuff, while the other seemed a Slytherin girl.

"Pansy." Draco muttered, looking at the girl who merely huffed and crossed her arms around her chest.

"We have nothing to talk about Draco: find yourself another carriage, would you?" She sneered.

"You can leave." The Hufflepuff added, "We came here first."

Harry raised an eyebrow as he sat down without much of a fuss. His right hand clenched. He looked over the two children sitting in front of him. One was the dark-haired Slytherin girl, while the other was probably a year younger than him, maybe. Draco, emboldened by his actions, followed suite and sat down in front of the Hufflepuff with a sort of smug look on his face. He, however, made his best bored expression.

"You don't scare me." Pansy added smugly, looking at him now. "It's all a load of bullshit anyway. You can't have killed Salazar Slytherin. You just failed and planned something with the ministry and Dumbledore to get you out of trouble." The girl smirked. "You're just Fudge's new horse to the next term aren't you?"

He didn't reply to her. The image of her brain being splattered by a Frangit spell came through his mind, but he squashed the thought away. He simply smiled back and chuckled.

"What's so funny?" The Hufflepuff asked with a snap. "You think you're above the law now? We don't buy it. We know you're just a Dark Lord, and we'll..."

He began to laugh. It wasn't even difficult when such tender creatures gave him such a wonderful way to express his complete disinterest in their pathological attempts at riling him up. The carriage began to move just as the Hufflepuff went for his wand, the movement sending him to tumble forward. Draco pushed him back and the boy flung a fist.

In a moment, Merlin's staff was in his hand and its thorns were protruding from its tip inches away from the boy's face. There was silence in the carriage from the shock of such a quick movement.

The boy's body pressed against the wall, his hand trying to clasp at the handle that for security measures, once the carriage began to move, locked itself with a spell.

"What's your name?" He asked, in a low murmur with what he hoped passed off as a smug grin.

"Go to hell. You can't kill me. They'll throw you in Azkaban. I'll become a Martyr for..."

He laughed again.

"Really? A Martyr? Such strong words for such a pathetically weak-minded individual. You think yourself a Gryffindor, right? You believe that as long as you put on a brave face someone will come and help you? Look to your side...do you see Miss...Pansy, moving to help you?" He chuckled as the girl's eyes widened like those of a doe caught in the light. The Slytherin girl had done a very normal thing: not meddling in affairs that could be risky or with odds stacked against her.

"You're just trying to break us." The boy muttered back, "But it won't work, you hear me!?" The student screamed. "Zacharias Smith doesn't..."

"Shut up." He hissed. The thorns grew into vines that soon lashed out and circled around the boy's head, muffling his screams and whimpers.

"I think he soiled himself." Draco muttered after a moment, as a stench suddenly grew in the air making Pansy gag and the blond-haired boy put a handkerchief to his nose.

"My, what a sad thing: suffering from bowel problems." He commented, as he quietly waited for the screams to abate, before snapping the staff's thorns away from the boy's face with a quick motion of his hand. The boy was sporting red blotches over his head and a runny nose now, coupled with a tear stricken face making him truly an example of humiliation well received.

"Bad isn't it?" Harry retorted calmly. "You think death is what I can give you?" The boy chuckled. "I can give you far worse, should you dare and come again to pester myself or my friends." His eyes then

went to Pansy, who made her best impression to press her body against the corner of the carriage.

"Pansy." He began with a small smile. "There's no need to be afraid." He added with a wink. "You're not like Zacharias here, right?" He casually asked, "You're smarter than him, yes?"

"Ah...I...Yes." She meekly whimpered while nodding furiously.

"Good." Harry smiled widely, bringing Merlin's staff to disappear once more within his invisible cloak. "And please, go back to being friends with Draco, all right?" He added as a sort of afterthought. "It would make me so sad to see such a long friendship fail apart because of me." He made what he hoped came out as a pout. "Can you do that?"

She widened her eyes, before biting her lip and finally nodding. There was a small whimper coming from the extremely embarrassed Zacharias, who clawed at the handle of the door trying to escape. The carriage was nearing the castle, and he nodded towards Draco.

Draco's wand pointed towards the boy's head, and with a softly whispered 'Episkey' the wounds on the Hufflepuff's face disappeared.

"Pansy, can you believe Zacharias soiled himself like a toddler?" Draco asked with his usually patented sneer mixed with disgust. "Maybe he needs to start wearing diapers if he can't control his bowels."

Draco's icy stare was a perfectly executed extra maneuver, and he found himself mentally applauding such move. The blond-haired boy was a perfect wingman to Duke Wyllt's actions, which would just become more and more distant from Harry Potter's with the passing of time.

"Y...Yeah! The sodding bastard." Pansy agreed, "Really Smith, you stink! Get the hell out of here!"

Finally the carriage stopped, and as Zacharias managed to open the door and run out, he gave one last harsh glare at Pansy. The girl recoiled slightly as if burned, before he spoke in a low murmur.

"Neither I nor Draco were on the carriage. You were with Hermione and Ginny."

Pansy's eyes widened, but she nodded quickly. He left followed by Draco, before joining in the queue together with his sister and the rest of their friends.

"Hermione, everything all right?" He asked with an apprehensive tone.

"Yes! Stop fussing over me Harry, I'm fine." The girl rolled her eyes with an amused tone. "I'm starting to think you defeated Salazar with a hug." She added, just as Lillian looked at him with wide eyes. Ginny and Luna both seemed to ignore him, but he knew they were simply listening in as the queue moved towards the entrance of the school.

Just like the students behind them, who would soon enter the rumor mill displaying how he had an incredibly nice and worrying side to him. It did make him twist his insides at the thought of being branded as an extremely nice guy, but he wondered what would happen once the rumor mill having him as a psychopath would clash with the other.

He had little doubt that the two would clash.

Till then, he'd care as long as he was under the professors' scrutiny. Hermione knew of course, because he trusted her. Draco caught up quickly and smiled at him, before walking next to his sister and whispering something in her ear. The blond-haired Malfoy girl turned her gaze on him for a moment, before nodding and slightly tapping with her right hand to her left side of the chest.

He walked into Hogwarts once more, step after step.

The stones met him and the hallways whispered to him their plight. The portraits hung chattered with renewed life, as if whatever strike they had done together with the ghosts had stopped. The ghost of the Grey Lady levitated near Harry, but as he looked at her with a sort of amused expression, she rolled her eyes. She couldn't get inside of him any longer. His mind was now barred and closed. If they wanted to talk, they'd have to do it in the old manner...but for that night, there was the feast.

"We'll see you tonight, young crow." Helena smiled at him, "We have much to catch up with."

"Yes we have." He replied with a bright smile that hid his pain. She had to know what the Bloody Baron had made him do, didn't she? So why hadn't she come out with it? It stung, to not know the why. It stung even harder to connect the feeling of ignorance to that of betrayal.

The Grey Lady floated away, resuming her place at the head of the Ravenclaw table. There was no Basileus to speak to her now. Luckily, with the fact that it was the second term, there wasn't to wait for first years or things like that.

"Granger, shouldn't you be in Gryffindor?" A startled voice asked as he sat down together with Hermione. The female voice belonged to Cho Chang, an upperclassman in her fourth year. He was surprised that somebody actually talked to them, considering how Luna's clothes were like he had expected the same level of violence on them. The blond-haired girl was sitting to his left, leaning on his shoulder with her eyes closed and a peaceful expression.

He didn't budge her. She was probably still feeling the pain from the ordeal on the car of the train. He'd have gone back to give them a lesson, but he could catch them later up in the tower...and from there the only escape would be through a single door, or the window if they knew how to fly.

He knew Michael Corner had been a part of it, Ginny had told him that. Then there were at least two other Ravenclaws who had participated, both girls. A fourth Ravenclaw was only watching the scene disinterested, even when Luna had broken up in tears. The thought of that made him clench his hands. Lost as he was, he didn't realize professor Flitwick had carefully made his way behind him.

"Mr. Potter?" The small professor squeaked, "I'd like to see you in my office later." He added.

"Yes professor," he smiled back at the man forcing himself into the most cheerful face possible, "I'll be right there after dinner!"

"Wonderful!" The quarter-goblin or half-goblin commented, before returning to the staff table. He felt Luna stir after the professor's last exclamation, and as she rubbed her eyes open once more, she looked at him with a scrutinizing gaze.

"You're real." She commented.

"I suppose I am?" He replied with a small smirk forming on his lips.

"It wasn't a dream, right?" She asked him, strangely touching his robes with her fingers, as if to make completely sure she wasn't dreaming him.

"Well, I'm here, aren't I?" He replied.

"Nargles make strange dreams become true sometimes." She admitted hastily, "How do I know you're really you?"

"Well, there can only be one real me right? So it has to be me." The girl was about to retort, when small popping noises were heard around the dining hall, forcing everyone to look at the staff table where Dumbledore had stood up.

He was actually surprised by Hermione grasping his other hand and clenching it, as he had turned to look at the Headmaster and had thus dropped his right hand on the bench. He'd address that other particular can of worms later on. The fact Dumbledore was about to speak was something he couldn't miss.

"Dear Students." Dumbledore began, "As you all know, certain events have brought to my attention new-found knowledge of my lacking in leading this school." The old man spoke with his usual kind tone, the one that belonged more to a grandfather, "Which is why this term will be my last."

There was a sharp increase of noise as murmurs flew around the hall. Harry's eyes narrowed as he once more felt Hermione's hand clench around his. There was something wrong in the headmaster's dialogue, and if only he could find out what it was...

"I will still continue my work in the Wizengamot," and now that was clearer to understand, "but there is some misinformation that has to

be removed, so that we all can have a pleasant last term here at Hogwarts."

There was silence, as the Headmaster continued.

"Mister Potter, can you please stand up?" He tensed just so slightly, before quietly moving to stand.

"Good," the old wizard nodded with a bright grandfatherly smile, "Mister Potter, as you all know, was accused of gruesome acts just like Miss Granger. I am ashamed to admit that it was by my faults that the ministry believed him the culprit of such acts for I did not consider Grindelwald might have had plans for Hogwarts itself."

He narrowed his eyes, what did Grindelwald have to do with his pardon?

"He came to me under the guise of Polyjuice and attacked and killed Gilderoy Lockhart, he Imperiused poor Miss Granger into using dark and forbidden artifacts and he was the sole responsible for everything that has happened in the past years." There was a tone of sadness in the man's voice that was hard to miss, and yet he couldn't help but feel it fake. "And I did not see at all. I have been blind, and for that we have lost many good students." The old wizard bowed his head. "I apologize to you Mister Potter, and to you Miss Granger, for the damage I have caused you."

Harry gritted his teeth as he formed a small condescending smile.

"It's all right Headmaster," he replied with a soft voice, "I'm sure everything you did was for the greater good after all." And he smiled gently as Dumbledore slightly flinched. It was a mere millisecond, probably nothing more than his imagination, but it was good to have placed that barb in.

"Indeed." Albus quickly nodded, "I ask of the student body to not attack Mister Potter or Miss Granger: they were not responsible for the actions of this year's first term, or of the previous years. Grindelwald was the sole culprit, and he has already been punished."

There were light murmurs in the hall now, eyes staring at both him and Hermione.

"On a side note, now more than ever we actually need for the houses to be united." Dumbledore added. A smile was forming on his lips as Harry's eyes widened as the implication sunk in. He had underestimated the man. He had thought he'd have to face an opposition, an enemy he could in the end outsmart.

"For that, I will personally oversee the King's club movement within Hogwarts, acting as their professor in charge." The old wizard smiled brightly and widely, "I'm sure we can all bring Hogwarts to its former splendor before my departure, right?"

He clenched his left hand tightly. He just had to summon Excalibur, dash through the hall and then behead Dumbledore. He could probably do it, couldn't he? No. If he knew half of what Dumbledore was able of, being a transfiguration professor in his youth, he'd probably be able to transfigure his plate into a giant titanium wall. He couldn't act rashly...even though the idea of decapitating viciously the man was sort of running in his head hand in hand with that of burning his body to cinders.

He meekly nodded, before sitting down once more. He didn't understand why Hermione clasped her hands around his right one, but it did somehow calm down a bit his inner turmoil, if only for a few seconds.

"Well then, one last bit of talking!" The Headmaster exclaimed happily, "Professor Remus Lupin has taken over Muggle studies in place of poor professor Burbage, who is currently at St. Mungos for treatment." His voice turned sorrowful for a moment, "Please treat Professor Lupin with respect."

As a chorus of 'yes, headmaster' echoed through the hall, the old wizard clapped his hand and food was finally served.

Harry brought up an eyebrow at the sight of what his plate filled with: a vast amount of food that ranged from ultra-fried chicken to extremely greased roast pig. While the other students did have their plates filled with the same kind of food, his held portions that would have sated a giant.

"Harry?" Hermione asked with her mouth agape. "What did you do?"

A three floors chocolate cake with strawberries and whipped cream stood in the middle of the table he was at. The scrawled message on a square of white chocolate actually gave him the answer to Hermione's question. He smiled and chuckled, before pointing at the square of chocolate with the words written in the dark variant of the sweet.

'King Iz Back!'

"The house-elves love me." He commented. "I still don't know why, but they do love me."

"They have crumple-horned shackles," Luna muttered half-dreaming, "You cut shackles." The girl returned to softly snoring a second later, her head gently dropped against his shoulder. He sighed and shook his head, before starting to eat whatever he could.

"So are you two together?" Cho Chang asked again, her eyes moving from Harry to Hermione and then to Luna. "Isn't she..."

"No." Hermione replied, shaking her head while flustered. "It's just...I didn't expect Dumbledore to say this...I asked for a transfer in Ravenclaw because I feared being in Gryffindor."

"For the brave of heart, they're a violent bunch." Kevin Entwhistle nodded curtly, from Cho's side. "King, what are we going to do now?" The boy added, "With Dumbledore on our side, there is nothing that can stop us."

"We'll have a meeting later." He replied, avoiding the argument. "Probably end of the week, not sooner because I think I'll have to catch up with the electives and formulate a study plan."

Hermione bit her lip in anxiousness next to him. What had the girl so worried now? He'd ask later, if he ever managed to have a moment of time. The dinner feast ended quite quickly, as everyone concentrated on eating. Afterwards, he found himself walking towards Flitwick's office, waving goodbye to Hermione who trudged together with a sleepy Luna to bed.

He wasn't actually worried for their safety now. While he doubted a nice little speech from Dumbledore would work miracles, he was

sure his own presence in the dormitory would. If he got his hands on the bastards who had hit Luna, he was sure nobody would ever raise a hand again on him or his friends. He didn't know when he had started to consider the girl a friend.

Probably the moment he had understood the girl was harmless. She seemed to be a day-dreamer of sorts, what with the Nargles and the Horned something and the likes. She wouldn't hurt a fly, and he was glad for it. At the very least he and Hermione would have someone else to talk with. The office of Flitwick was strangely normal, at least at first sight.

It didn't seem as if anything had been made down to his size, and yet he couldn't help but wonder how the professor managed to open the cupboard or the various tall drawers. The wonder ceased when he mentally remembered the words 'Accio' and 'Leviosa' and he shook his head. The half-goblin was a charm professor after all, there was just no way he hadn't ways to get the stuff on the 'highest shelf'.

The door closed behind him with a flick from the professor's wand, and the man chuckled before gesturing for him to sit.

"Sit, Mister Wyllt: we have much to discuss."

Harry's eyes widened for a moment, before he cautiously took the offered seat. His hand was already moving towards his wand, when the professor laughed heartily.

"Now, now! None of that! I'm your...liaison, shall we say, with the Gringotts bank."

For a moment, Harry stilled his breath. Then a small smile spread on his lips as he acknowledged with a nod the professor's words.

"Well, I admit I was surprised." Filius began after a few moments, his entire posture changing from that of the usually overexcited professor into one calmer and more controlled. It took Harry relatively little to accept the fact that the Charm professor had indeed been wearing a mask for all his time at Hogwarts, a mask that hid behind it a completely different individual. "There are a lot of words being said around the world, commenting on your prowess...challenging it, asking to see it again. It is a strenuous

thing at best, and because of that Dumbledore has come up with quite the endearing solution..."

"Training?" He retorted.

"Precisely." Filius nodded. "And who better than an ex dueling champion for the spot?" He smiled. "Without the trouble of Miss Scamander who is hunted by the law, we can begin anew our lessons."

"Pardon me professor, but if I remember correctly..."

The man brought up his right hand, its palm open as he gestured for Harry to keep quiet.

"I know." He added, "I know you think we trained during our second year...but this and that are different." He chuckled, "I'm loath to admit it, but no wizard usually likes in sharing its secrets. You understand I suppose: have you ever taught Ico, Trudo, or any other of your spells to anyone else?"

He tensed slightly. How did the man know about that?

"Please Mister Wyllt. I knew you had the Trudo down the moment I saw the Troll. I knew Ico is usually always another spell mentioned wherever Trudo is...and I am a Charm master, but that does not make me any less versed with curses or hexes."

"Hogwarts..."

"The school teaches only Jinxes. I know it is extremely demeaning, especially if you compare your curriculum to that of Durmstrang, but that is why we won't follow the Hogwarts curriculum during our private lessons." The half-goblin nodded.

"I have just a question." He asked carefully, his eyes narrowing. "Since we're being honest here: why did Gringotts have interest in me since the first year?"

Filius' eyes widened, before his hands clenched and his gaze settled on the surface of his desk.

"I do not understand what you're implying, Mister Wyllt..."

"Cut the act, professor." He muttered back. "You offered me lessons during the first year, didn't you? You personally came to see what I had of wrong, and..."

"That's what any head of the house would be doing!" Filius retorted hotly.

"Maybe. Then again you wouldn't have to so vehemently defend it had that been the case." He coolly commented. "And the goblins already had their plans all settled in this year? Oh no, I know you know something else, Professor Flitwick. I know the goblins know something else. I want to know what it is. If you want my cooperation, then I want to know."

"Truly a Ravenclaw," Filius chuckled, "With a spruce of Slytherin." He added as an afterthought.

"I'm loyal to my friends as a Hufflepuff and brave as a Gryffindor." Harry commented offhandedly, "That makes me a Hogwarts student." He grinned. "Now, I'm sure you're going to tell me you can't speak to me, because of some vow or maybe because of some sort of bullshit reason like needing permission from the higher-ups or something like that." The boy smiled widely as Filius actually chuckled again. "So I'm giving you a week to deliver."

"And what if I, or my higher-ups, were to refuse?" He asked back curiously.

"I'm already helping you with the goblin's treasures. I'm a better ally if I'm cooperating all the way, rather than being forced. I am quite actually right in thinking that the goblins and Dumbledore do not see eye to eye. Anything that helps me will damage him, can't you agree?"

"Maybe." Filius nodded. "I will inform who I have to. Now, these are the schedules for your electives. Give one to Miss Granger too, would you?" The man handed over two papers, and as he nodded and received them, he couldn't help but chuckle.

"I'm going to be bored to tears." He whispered.

"Oh right, I was nearly forgetting." Filius retorted, rummaging through his desk before taking out some sort of small and round pocket watch. Harry immediately tensed, until his eyes finally caught on the fact that it wasn't a pocket watch, but more of a sort of strange sandglass inside a set of metallic circles.

"Well, Mister Wyllt...I think that in your endeavor of creating two, let us say, individuals..." The half goblin smiled, "This little trinket might be useful to you."

His palm open, he received the strange-looking thing on it. It felt cool to the touch, the metal loops seemingly holding an incision as the black metal of the object shone briefly.

'Tick-Tack, Tick-Tack, spin me around and I'll bring you back.

Careful that whatever you do, change is not something I can do."

"How do you know what I'm planning?" He asked the half-goblin, who simply smiled.

"Mister Wyllt, the game of subtlety is something that many have played for years and centuries. While one cannot compare life to a chess game, or to any other type of game, remember that experience...that is something extremely tangible and useful. What else could you do after all? We know you cannot do a frontal assault on Dumbledore or the ministry...and this? This instead you can."

"You won't really come out in public with your support, will you?" He wasn't actually asking the question to Flitwick, but the man had said the 'We', and somehow he knew the half-goblin had understood.

"Indeed. We are first and foremost a neutral entity, mister Wyllt." There was a hint of sarcasm dripping in the tone of the professor, and he couldn't help but nod. "The object you hold is a Time-Turner: now let me explain to you how it works..."

He found himself nodding to the professor's explanation, but it was only as he stepped outside, holding the Time-Turner safely within his pocket, that he understood. He had an invisibility cloak. He had a Time-Turner that could send him back. He could be in two places at the same time. He could do double the things he could normally do. He could hold meetings with Dumbledore watching the King's men

knowing that somewhere else he'd be holding the meeting with another group at the same time.

He suddenly shuddered.

Hitler's party once held the distinction between the SS and the SA. Both had helped him rise to power, but the second one held an autonomy that the Nazi dictator could not tolerate as the Germans themselves saw how chaotic the SA was with their incredible violence. More than his own party, what Hitler had needed to hold the power had been his people, and when the people had started to frown at the SA...

The night of the long knives had taken care of it.

In this situation, he'd have little by little to take care of the problem. He needed to make sure things would turn out right. He needed a double club.

He'd have to speak to Draco. It was no longer a question of how many students he could bring under his arms, but a question of whom he could trust and whom he could not...and mostly, it was a question of who could quickly learn Occlumency.

First, he'd need to control information.

Then, he'd need to control the movement of people around the castle.

Thirdly, he'd need the manpower.

The fourth and final push would be to hoist his own flag atop the castle, before Dumbledore could leave on his own and bring someone else in his place.

As he entered the Ravenclaw common room, he wasn't surprised to see Hermione waiting for him near the fire. He was, instead, surprised of the Grey Lady shimmering in existence next to her as he neared.

"Boys will be boys," he heard the Grey Lady say to Hermione, before the ghost smiled at him and nodded.

"Well then, Harry...there is a confession I have to make." She began carefully, in a low whispered voice.

And he nodded and stood up straight, as he prepared himself for whatever truth the Grey Lady had fathomed on telling him. Would she finally admit knowing about the Bloody Baron? Would she tell him why she had said nothing to him? Would she...

"I'm responsible for Tom Riddle's corruption."

Now that...

That he hadn't expected.

Author's notes

And we begin!

Harry Wylt and the Path to the Crown.

I used the Proofreading tool of the site for this chapter. Took me a while to actually find the damn button, but it sort of works. Anyone has any suggestion on proofreading tools? Currently i'm debating words' effectiveness on the grammar side. Trying a mixture of LibreOffice and this one online. If you have any suggested Grammar correction tool, feel free to send it my way.

Harry Wylt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter 2

The fire pit in the Ravenclaw's common room gently crackled with its dying embers, as the ghost of the Grey Lady grimly spoke.

"It was my fault. Tom Riddle...He became what he is because of me. My choices, my actions...they brought him forth." She whispered, shaking her head slowly. "I should have known. I should have suspected...but I didn't." She grimly and bitterly laughed. "My mother never really could look at me, could she?"

Harry blinked. "Ehm...what does this have to do with..." Actually, another question would be who Tom Riddle was.

"It's a long story." Helena Ravenclaw whispered. "A tale that speaks not of three brothers like the one of the Hallows, but of two brothers and a sister, all connected by a web of lies and deceits that culminates in a horrific tale of blood and betrayal." She smiled slowly, "One that however holds a pivotal point in a single well placed question: what sin is higher, than treachery to your friends?" She floated gently back towards her painting, entering it and closing her eyes.

"Treachery is the betrayal of trust," she whispered. "No matter how much you may sugar coat your words, or how much your friends might call themselves such...eventually everyone has a turning point." She raucously laughed at that, but the noise didn't reach above to the dormitories, or so he hoped. Her eyes shot vicious glares to Hermione, as if she was an intruder in a conversation that she had no place in.

"But I'm not here to actually speak about how friendship is important, because it isn't: a lot of people rise to power by killing others, by having no friends but books or maybe paintings." Somehow Harry felt that as a small jab in his direction, and he couldn't help but feel uncomfortable. "Tell me, Harry. If I am the daughter of Rowena and my surname is Ravenclaw, who is my father?"

Harry was about to retort that it wasn't explained, since after all Rowena Ravenclaw was...and there he stilled. Ravenclaw. The surname passed on to the daughter was given by the father.

Ravenclaw wasn't the surname of Rowena. If that wasn't the surname however, what could it mean?

"Rhonwen." Helena began. "My mother's name was Rhonwen, not Rowena. Is that name familiar?" She asked, but no reply came, not even from Hermione. "I suppose not." The portrait smiled. "Caer Guorthigirn rings a bell? Vortigern? Craig Gwrtheyrn? The fort burned down by Heavenly Fire, did you not know? Fiendfyre answered the call that day to destroy it, heavenly indeed! The treachery executed, the Saxon ruling the Welsh...You still don't understand? Fine," the Grey Lady disappeared from the portrait, suddenly reappearing in her ghostly form within the room.

"Seek those answers out first, and we might speak of why there is no greatest sin than love to hatred turned...Godric's old name was Orric or Oisc as his father called him." There was a sad smile on her face, as she turned to look at Harry. "I hope you'll never have to understand my words...but I know that no matter what, you cannot stop the clock from going forward." With a last nod, she disappeared within the floor of the castle.

Harry's mouth was still open when Hermione began to talk again. The brown-haired girl had been wide-eyed since the beginning, but only now did she find the courage to speak.

"Harry?" She asked carefully. "Is...Was she...Was this normal for you during your first year?" The girl finally found the way to articulate a sentence, as he shook his head. "She just spouted nonsense and then disappeared! How is that even remotely helpful and just why does she think this has to do with whoever this Tom Riddle guy is? Who is Tom Riddle to begin with!?"

"I'd like to say that this isn't the norm...but my first year wasn't normal to begin with." He replied truthfully. "I find that forgetting about things you don't understand until later is for the best." He added as he handed over one of the schedules to Hermione. "Don't try to think too much about it for now. We'll scurry the library tomorrow, and by the way she talked Tom Riddle has been a student at the school. We'll find him too while we look for Helena's father."

The girl nervously nodded, before turning to leave. As her back disappeared up the stairs to the female dorms, he slowly exhaled a

breath he didn't know he had held. He strained his ears to make sure Hermione had really gone upstairs, and then grasped the Time-Turner. The small object encircled in bands of metal still felt cool to the touch, even though he had held it in his pocket.

Could this small thing really send him back in time? Professor Flitwick had told him the rules of such a trinket: as long as he didn't see his past self, or try to change the past, everything else was fine. He couldn't actually change events that had happened, but nothing prevented him from getting another...perspective on some matters or some insight for the future.

He unclasped the invisible cloak, hiding it beneath the invisibility one that he wrapped around himself as a sort of second skin, the Hallow answering his call and his need to hide. The ring of Merlin had to somehow have granted him control over the cloak, and if the slight tug he had felt towards Dumbledore's ring was of any indication, then the Headmaster himself seemed to have yet another Hallow.

Quietly, the cowl covering his face, and with the knowledge of being now completely invisible, he spun the Time-Turner three times. If it worked just like Filius had said, then he would go three hours back in time: more than enough to have a bit of a long overdue revenge.

Time seemed to freeze for an instant, as around him things twirled and spun out of proportions, somehow deconstructing into colors, sounds, and then nothing more. He closed his hands and grasped tightly the Time-Turner, that somehow seemed an anchor through the twirling masses that flew at incredible speeds around him. He felt the tug suddenly lash out, as if something across the boundaries of the Turner called to him, but it was just for an instant and then the feeling disappeared.

He opened his eyes wide and looked in surprise around him. He had appeared in the entrance hall, just as the students were trickling in. He was in awe at the scene that was familiar to him, albeit from another viewpoint. The Time-Turner didn't actually bring you back in the precise spot the past self was, because otherwise it would be extremely difficult to hide and avoid paradoxes. Still, this was exciting.

He didn't stop by to see his past self with Past-Hermione walk by, instead quickly making his way through the half-empty hall where

the staff was assembling just then, Dumbledore still missing. He walked the corridors, dashing on the stairs until he finally found himself near the Headmaster's office. There, he waited catching his breath.

After a few minutes that seemed to stretch like an hour, Albus Dumbledore walked out of his office, heading towards the Dining Hall to give his speech. The old wizard was dressed just like he had been for dinner, with his horrendous purple and shiny robe. He narrowed his eyes as he caught the glint of the gem embedded on the ring on the Headmaster's hand. The pull was there. He stopped breathing the moment the old wizard stilled. The man's blue eyes turned around, looking for a single moment towards him, before glancing over his invisible form and then frowning slightly.

"How?" The old man's voice stilled him, but then he realized it wasn't directed towards him. The paintings around the corridors were catching his attention. "Why?" The old man asked to the nearby one.

"Orders." The painting shrugged. For one single moment, Harry felt that something was wrong, utterly and completely wrong. Hadn't the ghosts stopped their strike sooner? Hadn't the paintings been there since a few days at least?

No. Apparently they had come back the split moment he had entered Hogwarts.

He hoped his heart would stop beating savagely: he'd probably hear it if it continued like that...but luckily, the man didn't question the painting any longer, instead beginning to whistle a tune as he moved away, heading off to dinner. He, however, had something else to do. It was a childish thing he wished to do, really. Still, he quickly scampered inside the Headmaster's office just a second before the Gargoyle closed, and made his way up the small set of stairs.

Excalibur hummed in his hand, surrounding as it was his wand, but he wasn't there to use the sword. The office of the Headmaster was just as he remembered it, barring the additions of a Ravenclaw tie hanging loosely on a nearby shelf next to a Slytherin one. The pictures of Gregory Goyle and Penelope Clearwater looked around vividly annoyed at their positions. It was some sort of altar for the deceased he supposed. Gregory's tie even held a small amount of blood on it.

He sobered up from the smiling face he had held, if for a moment, at the sight of the portraits in the room snoring or talking to one another, completely ignoring his presence. He was moving slowly, he had to or they'd be alerted. He dropped from his pocket a couple of lemon drops within the bowl on the Headmaster's desk, but his weren't just Lemon Drops...they didn't look any different from the other ones, but he might have exaggerated with the dosage of a very particular potion.

His original plan had been to try to use Sophie to deliver the sweets, or just casually find a way in with the invisibility cloak to drop them and then wait for the door to open again. Now, however, he didn't need that. He had his own personal 'Lupin the Third-Approved' escape trinket.

He spun the Time-Turner back one more hour, the feeling of excitement never leaving him as he realized he no longer even had to fear about being 'entrapped' in a closed space. He could just spin back time and appear elsewhere, and yet nobody had ever thought of using this...for other things? The best tool to avoiding capture was the Time-Turner, everything else wasn't needed. Scouts could be used to warn armies of the incoming threats and have them make detours, or accidents could be forewarned with enough time and...

And that would make the world a better place with no criminality, and with Voldemort actually being defeated after a few minutes of his reign.

So there was a catch. There was such a horrible and horrendous catch that even the Dark Lord refused to use such a mean of time travel. He suddenly felt himself far less amused at the small trinket he held in his hand. Voldemort had never, if ever, been said to have used one. Nobody had used a Time Turner to go back and fight off the man. Deaths had still happened, and whatever reason it was...he didn't at all feel any better now.

He reappeared on the train, invisible as he watched himself walk in the car of Draco and Ginny, with Hermione standing behind him with the compartment's door open. Somehow, he felt that he had not gone back to the other car to enact revenge for Luna because of an

invisible him standing there, just a few meters away from himself of the past.

The truth was that he was probably busy trying to act as 'Kingly' as possible.

In some sort of twisted way, he actually thought he had managed it well...even with the hassle.

Past Harry

He saw Draco kneeling in front of him, like a knight of old, and that made him stop. In the car Ginny held her eyes wide open, watching in shock her adopted brother's action. Luna was just smiling with her usual dreaming smile, while he could feel Hermione draw in breath from behind him.

He didn't know what to do at such a display, and thus he brought both of his hands on Draco's shoulders and whispered.

"Rise, Draco." He commanded, "My friend." He smiled gently.

The pale blond-haired boy awkwardly made a sort of frown on his face, before standing back up. He actually was taller than the Malfoy heir by at least a few inches now. The boy's eyes caught his attention; they displayed the same haunted gaze he saw each time he looked into a mirror. He turned to look at Ginny and Luna, and he smiled at them too.

"Hey there." He gestured with a nod to Hermione to enter the car, and as the girl closed the door behind her, he sat down next to Draco. The brown-haired girl managed to get herself seated with Luna and Ginny, since both were smaller than the two boys.

"So it's true." Luna smiled. "You're back and the Nargles will leave."

He smiled at the blond-haired girl, and nodded. He frowned after a few seconds, seeing the state of her disheveled clothes.

"What happened?" He asked looking worriedly as Hermione herself was now fussing over the blond-haired younger Ravenclaw.

"I fell." She replied.

"Michael Corner." Ginny muttered, "He and two Ravenclaw bitches did that. If I hadn't gone and looked for her I don't know what they'd have done." Her voice laced with something, some sort of aggressive streak that seemed directed...at him.

"But that's all right...I just fell," Luna said. "The Nargles made me trip, really." She vehemently added.

"Hush. Let me take care of your clothes now." Hermione murmured; the wand moved deftly as she whispered Reparo.

"I'll take care of them." He said, a slight feeling of uneasiness settling over him. He couldn't just go over there now, could he? "Later."

"Bullshit." Ginny's mouth opened for the word pronounced far faster than what anyone could have expected.

He winced at the crude word slightly, before raising an eyebrow. Draco was speechless, looking from him to Ginny with a sort of shocked expression. Ginny had been the most vocal in his defense probably, if the pale blond boy was actually rendered unable to utter a word.

"Last time, you said the same things." She muttered, "And look, what did that give us? Houses are just going to tear at each other internally now! They'll fault you and the others who fell for your words. Gryffindors will just prance around with the Hufflepuffs and..."

"You deduced all this from just what, an hour?" He asked back clenching his hands together. "Really? Have you no faith?" He queried. "If you think that childish squabbles or the pettiness of students may become a problem, then think again." He nearly hissed the last words. "There will be no repeating of last time."

"Oh yes," Ginny snorted, "Because that's really all you need to do. Just because you say that doesn't mean it's going to become true." Her voice turned slightly lower, "Just leave me alone."

"Is there something I should know?" He asked gently, looking from Draco to Ginny and vice-versa.

"It's...It's Tracy." Ginny relented first, Draco was about to say something but held his tongue.

"What did she do?" He asked carefully.

"Her parents were against me being over during the summer, and..."

"Is that why you dyed your hair blond?" Hermione asked, her voice laced with concern.

"Well," Ginny scoffed, "I didn't like it red to begin with."

"What did she do?" He asked again.

"Nothing!" Ginny yelled, "It's not her! It's her parents!"

"They were angry at her, right?" He hazarded. She averted her gaze and looked sideways, and strangely that was enough for him to know he had hit the bull's eye. "And they made it vocal in front of you, didn't they?" He added as an afterthought. The way the girl clasped her hands against the sides of her robe however... "They hit her, didn't they?"

She sharply turned her head to stare at him in shock. Probably she was thinking he could read minds now. Maybe that could enter the rumor mill too, couldn't it? He amusedly nodded and watched with interest as she stilled and then averted her gaze like a doe caught in the light.

"There is nothing to fear, child." He whispered in a low controlled voice. "I'll take care of it too." He smiled gently, "What King would I be, if I left my subjects to suffer?"

Ginny smiled slowly, the amused smirk on her face a sign that she now felt clearly different from just a moment before. She shook her head gently, before letting her eyes stare again at his.

"I'm yours to command, my King." She whispered back.

"Let's defeat the Nargles together then, Harry." Luna beamed him a smile, which would be a perfectly normal thing...if the girl hadn't fallen asleep with her face pressed against Hermione's shoulder.

The fact she was dream-talking made him crack a chuckle, and with a light shaking of the head, he began to ask about the holidays. Any thought on revenge seemed lost on him: he'd take care of them later.

Present Harry

Maybe there was some sort of empathic link between different selves? He didn't want to test it at the moment, but with his wand at the ready...he moved towards the car of the bullies. He opened the door with a flick of his wand, getting a good sight of the passengers within before it closed again. Michael Corner was one, and yet as his eyes narrowed on the other occupants he couldn't help but feel a spark of anger rise.

Anthony Goldstein was the one who hadn't helped the girl, standing in his corner reading a book: he was the only one who didn't look to have broken off a sweat. Cho Chang was instead chuckling grimly together with another Ravenclaw, both girls had their hair a bit disheveled, and small pieces of cloth were on their laps and on the ground.

"Stupid door." Michael snarled. He could hear him from the other side, and since there was no reflection or blurred image reflected from the door's glass panel, he could easily eavesdrop on them.

"Did you see the face of Malfoy's whore, Lisa?" Cho commented, "That will teach both her and Looney to stop thinking they own the school."

The other Ravenclaw gave out a small laugh and he knew now that the only one he didn't know was Lisa. He didn't actually remember her, but now he'd carve her face down in the list of those to punish.

"She believed herself untouchable huh, being a King's whore and what not." Lisa commented, as he heard the tone on Michael's voice turn smug and snobbish, with a good mixture of arrogance poured in.

"I've got no qualms in hitting Slytherins...they shouldn't even be considered humans to begin with: with what they did at the start of the break, I still wonder why they don't just burn them all or drown them in their dungeons."

"They got us good, I admit." Cho mumbled, "But really: Looney should have known better than to come in here and try to menace us. It's not like we were her friends to begin with."

"Neville told me Potter might be coming back to Hogwarts." Anthony suddenly piped in, probably having put his book away. "He said that we have to stand together to avoid a repeat of the start of the break."

"Wasn't he friends with Looney?" Michael suddenly blurted out. Somehow Harry could imagine the dark-haired boy's face fill with worry, and that made him smile.

"Well, what are you afraid of now Michael?" Cho snapped back, "He's a third year like you isn't he? You can't believe all that stuff about the defeat of Salazar being real now, can you?"

"It's not that," the boy retorted hastily, "But he did escape from Hogwarts!"

"So what? Maybe Grindelwald helped him. Maybe...you know those rumors on the Headmaster no? He always had a shine on the Potters. They helped him with the war effort against You-Know-Who years ago, it's all in the books: he probably clouted the entire ordeal and had the boy pardoned while doing his dirty laundry."

"So you're saying Dumbledore helped Potter escape?" Lisa asked.

"I don't know: but I doubt Michael would have been able to escape from Hogwarts, and Potter isn't all that powerful. Weren't you there when he boasted about changing the system? It was nothing more than a bunch of worthless ramblings."

He clenched his wand. He flicked the tip again, smashing the door to the side as his wand flared to life ready to burn, tear, and cut.

He had to admit that the thought felt good.

He could do this again and again. Maybe he could even go as far as cursing them back in their cribs! How back could he go with the Time-Turner? Could he turn back the clock until he reached the beginning of the world? Could he go back to Grindelwald's reign? Could he drown Dumbledore as a baby? Could he slice to bits and

pieces a newborn Voldemort, before he became the monster he now was? Could he avoid all of this and much more?

He was just about to send the first curse through the open door, when a shower of flames pushed him aside and grasped him from the back, sending him to tumble and teleport away from the commotion that he had caused. A commotion that he would not hear about even at dinner...probably they had given the fault to the door once more.

As he landed, he found himself on the stone corridor of Salazar's chamber of secrets. The room was standing eerily silent, if not for the swashing of water that slowly began to drain. He breathed in deeply for a moment, before calming down. He found himself thinking: if he had gone along and cursed them, then he wouldn't have seen them at the feast now, would he? Maybe he could have spun the Time-Turner back once more to prevent it? It could have worked, of course then he'd have to wait in an empty car at the end of the train, and this was...

Sophie trilled at him. Her beak pecked him on the shoulder as he winced. Making her best woodpecker imitation, Sophie continued hitting him with her beak and her wings, sort of slapping him like a worried mother would do after seeing a petulant child whine one time too many.

"Ouch! Sophie! Stop it! Ehi. Ouch. No! Wait..." He exclaimed as he tried to move backwards. He slipped on the slightly humid ground, falling backwards as he brought his arms forward to protect his face on reflex. He doubted Sophie would actually try to peck him in the eyes, but he couldn't just risk it now, could he?

Finally the assault relented, and as he breathed in to calm his beating heart, he lowered his arms. The phoenix's eyes locked on his own with what looked every bit like a motherly glare. She screeched at him, rasping with her talons on his chest and making him wince.

"Ouch!" He hissed finally, "All right!" He added. "I'm not going to use it for revenge again!" He exclaimed. There was one last shrill screech from Sophie, before the phoenix apparently felt having driven the point home enough. She affectionately poked him on the

cheek then, before flapping her wings and flying on the lower level of the chamber of secrets.

He rolled his eyes as he stood up, before heading down the stairway to Salazar's private chamber. He had a few hours to pass, and spending them thinking on what the Grey Lady had said...maybe he could rummage through the Slytherin's founder's library? His hand headed forward, starting to read the various titles in Parseltongue. All of them appeared penned by the same hand, and as he narrowed his gaze he realized that all held the same author too.

Salazar Slytherin's books were all written by Herpo the Foul.

He knew of the man for being a Basilisk breeder and it made sense that the two knew each other. Considering the enormous lifespan and time taken to travel that the Hogwarts' founder had, it was probable the two had eventually met. This however didn't help him. If both Arthur and Merlin were sons of Salazar, then they had to have had different mothers. Yet the feeling of betrayal came from Salazar's memories...so different fathers.

If Helena Ravenclaw was the sole official Ravenclaw...then it meant that both Arthur and Merlin had been bastards. If they both had been bastards, then Henry Slytherin who was of the same age of Helena and plied for her love...

Why would a mother need to hide her baby from its father?

The thought struck him as he realized that indeed, there was a reason. If Henry was the son of Salazar and whoever the man had officially married, and he had loved Helena...and the girl had been an official 'Ravenclaw' then there would be no reason to do so.

If, however, Helena was not a Ravenclaw...

If, by chance, she was in truth Salazar's daughter just like Merlin and Henry were his sons...then Helena and Henry were Half-sister and Half-brother one to the other.

Why would Helena speak of only two brothers and a sister however?

Arthur. Arthur was the sore spot. The only way for him to avoid being connected to Salazar would be for him being connected in

another way. Somehow, the thought of bravery went hand in hand with the idea that Godric could be his father. So if Godric Gryffindor was the father of Arthur, who was the mother?

If it was Rowena, then while it did make sense for Salazar's anger to exist, it yet again brought forth the question of why the woman had then later married a Ravenclaw, unless something happened to the other two in the meantime...

He whined pitifully to the ceiling.

"I can't get to the bottom of it!" He dropped down on the nearby armchair, closing his eyes as he tried to let sleep claim him. He needed sleep after all: his internal clock still ticked normally and did not have the rewind button. He'd sleep it off and think about it later on...maybe the Grey Lady had been wrong?

In frustration, he stood up from the armchair and began to stomp around the room. The papers on Salazar's desk caught his attention once more, as he passed by them. The pictures of the Dementors were now eerily making sense to him, together with the scribbled notes on what the creatures seemed to enjoy and hate. He winced as he recalled what he had done to them, but the words he had pronounced...what wicked present did he mean would rise?

He had destroyed the Dementors, hadn't he?

As he slowly brought his hand towards the paper, two words blared in front of him like molten fire.

Cŵn Annwn, the Hounds of Annwn. The Wild Hunt, this is the myth of the creatures that suck souls from mortal men. Eerily reminds of the Dementors that serve my teacher, and yet Merlin states the Dementor and the Hunt have nothing in common. He insists the name of my son is to be the same as his, and this troubles me. If it weren't for the age...but Rowena holds a secret. I know: I heard my proud snake hiss to me about her nightly walks. I'll look later. Morgana fusses. She doesn't seem to enjoy the noise of my pen scribbling.

The paper burned to cinders within an instant, leaving behind nothing but black ashes together with the rest of the desk. He took a step backwards from such a display of fire, Sophie screamed and

flapped her wings, trying to reach him. From the burning desk a ghostly figure emerged, wide smile and crooked teeth that seemed those of the devil himself.

He bore a twirling and mad gaze, as his ethereal figure seemed less and less like that of Peeves and more like...something else.

"Well." Peeves whispered with a bright smile, "What do we have here." He added with a smug look.

He didn't know why he felt scared of Peeves. The ghost was a poltergeist wasn't he? He had to be innocuous if none of the students had ever died because of him. Yet Excalibur was in his hand and pointed at the figure, just like Merlin's staff now stood at full height in his other.

"Oh..." The voice of the poltergeist filled with absolute glee. "Finally!" The ghostly figure laughed. His left hand opened as somehow, he literally pressed Sophie against the nearby wall. The phoenix's cries of anguish soon gave way to gurgled groans and gasps as with a final sickening crunch the bird became smoldering paste. It softly burned like some sort of slow burning coal against the wall, a dark and sickening blotch that looked more like a stain than a phoenix.

"Stop it!" He yelled, pointing Excalibur at the poltergeist's face.

"Oh?" Peeves smiled, closing his fist. "Why...I think we have a few things to discuss, Wyllt." The ghost smiled as it slid his face forward, a silver droplet of ectoplasm falling down along Excalibur's blade where it left a cut on the creature's cheek. Ghosts could bleed then by the hand of his sword...somehow that particular tidbit of knowledge didn't make him feel any better.

His blood froze. Right about now his other self was still on the train, talking to Draco, Ginny, Hermione and Luna. He had time, at least until nightfall, to solve this problem.

"I told you, a long time ago," Peeves muttered, "That the stone was mine."

"You mean Hogwarts' cornerstone?" He croaked out, his voice hearable above a slightly lamenting set of chirps. He was glad to

hear the slight chirping noise of a baby Sophie in the corner of the room, but at the moment curiosity was burning him with desire to know just what Peeves wanted to say: otherwise he'd have beheaded the thing already.

"Yes." The poltergeist smiled. "So I thought of something." The creature turned invisible, disappearing from in front of him as he suddenly felt a weight on his back. "What if I made a deal with you? I mean that instead of killing you I could make a deal that would work best for everyone!" Peeves was now back to back with him, and as he sharply turned around, Excalibur in flames and ready to strike, the poltergeist disappeared once more.

"Within Hogwarts, I am invincible." The poltergeist mock-intoned, making a curtsy as his amused face was starting to get on Harry's nerves. The thing then chuckled. "And you are a pathetic attempt at a hero."

"How do you know this?" He asked, "Dumbledore told you?"

"I don't speak with Dumbledore!" Peeves snarled back, "I don't speak with anyone that wastes my time." The ethereal thing hissed. "You on the other hand...you can help me." He nodded, pointing at the sword.

"At the moment, all ghosts reside within the cornerstone of Hogwarts: even the paintings are all hidden within the only room the Headmaster cannot enter."

"The room that requires the blood of the founders to open?" He asked, only to receive a 'shush' from the creature.

"Silence! I'm speaking..." The ghost's face turned dreamy. "I am in need of something, something that only you can give me back: something that they stole from me!"

"And what is it?" He muttered his eyes narrow. "You're not making me any inclined in helping you."

"But you wish for the bigger picture don't you?" Peeves smiled. "I'm sure you'll be thrilled if I were to tell you."

"H...How?" He asked. He couldn't be referring to the Grey Lady. The ghost came afterwards, not before. He couldn't have told him that, but he could...he could have asked the Grey Lady to say it in that way. He could have asked the ghost of Helena to speak in such a way for some sort of reason that would have made him curious, that would have led him towards querying and...

"This doesn't make sense." He hissed, "Why would I tell you that you need to have the Grey Lady explain to me in a curious way about the entire bigger picture?" He snapped his mouth shut, as a feeling of dread washed over him to the very point that his entire soul shuddered.

Peeves smiled.

He smiled the wicked smile of the big-bad antagonist who has just been delivered the Hero on a silver platter.

"Someone's got a Time-Turner, isn't it?" The ghost laughed. "I thought it strange! For your presence here now so soon, yet I didn't think...Oh how amusing!"

"What? What the hell are you talking about!?" He yelled back at the poltergeist. "How is this related!? Stop laughing for fuck's sake and ANSWER ME!" As he roared the very flames that surrounded Excalibur grew in intensity, washing against the stone floor and cracking it, if ever so slightly.

Peeves didn't recoil from the sight. He didn't even flinch.

"Let me see how I could put it..." The ghost mockingly intoned. "Riddle me this! There are two brothers and a sister, yet three boys and a single girl...how do you connect them? What is the answer to a riddle with no rhymes and no times? What is the answer to the meddling of time?"

The sick feeling lurched in his stomach again. This was eerily similar to what the Grey Lady had told him at the beginning. If Peeves had instructed her to say that, then this sentence would soon...

"Poor old Vortigern, he should have known." Peeves shook his head. "Old fool shouldn't have gone to the whore." He chuckled. "Poor old Arthur, bless him wherever he is." He mocked, with a light smirk, "for

his mother was a whore...an adulterer she was not, but maybe free love? Or Amortentia if that is what you call it today. Of course the fault was of the bastard, never of the father!" He giggled.

"Such great friends!" He exclaimed. "Such great rivalries." His right hand cussed into an upside claw, his eyes blazing red. "Yet in the end, one should always check what one drinks." He shrugged then, "Rowena always was petty to begin with. She wouldn't have needed a trinket to make herself smarter otherwise."

And there Harry took a deep breath, before narrowing his eyes on the poltergeist. His hand clenched Excalibur and as he brought Merlin's staff forward, a single word escaped his mind.

"Ignis!" White fire poured out of his staff, like a wave crashing against the other wall, sending waves of heat all around the room as its strength charcoaled the very wall of the chamber it had hit against.

"I'm but a buffoon! No need to twist your pants!" Peeves yelled out loud, flying away from the fire, that didn't burn him in the slightest.

"Speak!" He roared at him. "Tell me what this means! What is the problem with you!?"

"With me?" The ghost chuckled. "The problem...The problem is you, Harry."

"Acknowledged by the founders' blood, the changer will rise to defeat the darkness that creeps to the house of the dragon, heir of he who worshipped by all walks with the animals, he shall face his enemies atop the spires of time and space itself. Unbind by darkness, prophecy or light his choice shall mark the difference between redemption and revenge."

"That's Flamel's prophecy!" He exclaimed, only for the ghost to laugh.

"No!" He roared. "That's Morgan's! That is the prophecy of Morgan le Fay, sister of Arthur by same father and different mother! Her mother was sinful Therese who abandoned her at birth, for she was the product of filtered love!"

"Morgan's?" He muttered. "What does this have to do with Tom!?"

"It has everything to do with him," Peeves suddenly smiled, "And I'm glad you mentioned him first...might I say that will be another thing I'll have the Grey Lady speak of? Well! In any case...He was the first to try! He had the requisite, but he lost on the second sentence!"

"Ack...Acknowledged by the founders' blood?" He whispered.

"Yes." And with that single sentence the name Tom Marvolo Riddle appeared in a flash of red, before slowly morphing into a sentence that would make his eyes widen even more. "I am Lord Voldemort."

"But how?" He muttered, "He wasn't..."

"He is Salazar descendant." Peeves whispered with a small smile. "And you will find that being his descendant is enough also for Gryffindor's blood."

"Gryffindor?"

Peeves just chuckled.

"I seek my rightful crown, Wyllt." Peeves whispered in a low mocking tone. "Find it, and I will grant Hogwarts' wards to you! With those none shall ever trouble you, and within this stronghold you will be safe from all...refuse me, and I will kill all that you love."

The Poltergeist chuckled as he disappeared into the floor, not so different from the Grey Lady of before...no, of afterwards, of the time still to come. And as he looked at such a scene he couldn't help but bring a hand to his head and close his eyes shut.

He felt tired. The feeling of excitement that had washed over him at the grasping of the Time-Turner mechanics now left the place to the tired sleep he needed. He flicked Excalibur back to wand form, and as he twisted the tip of the wand, the black powder of the Extinguo spell came into reality. The small white flames extinguished themselves within minutes, and as he walked cautiously to retrieve the once again newborn Sophie, he couldn't help but sigh.

He gently picked the phoenix's chick with his hands, and then deposited her on Salazar's bed. He nestled her between a pair of pillows, while he simply dropped half-dead on the side of the bed.

As darkness claimed his sight, he couldn't help but think that at least, judging by the hour he was in...he'd get a nice long sleep.

In a castle where a psychopathic poltergeist seemed to have taken a fancy on him.

And a Magical World War Two hero wanted him under his thumb.

Yet he slept.

Change was coming after all.

He'd make sure of it.

Author's notes

Explanation on the blood-lines.

Now...

Godric+Rowena= Arthur.

Salazar+Rowena= Merlin, Helena.

Rowena+?= Helena (Thought of, in truth Slytherin)

Salazar+?= Henry.

Explanation:

Haven't you always found it strange how Henry would just go homicidal with Helena? No, really. Think about a very good reason for it to happen. He's a Slytherin isn't he? Shouldn't he be cunning and all? And Helena escaped with the diadem of her mother because she was jealous, yet she spurned off Henry's love so violently that it shook the man to the point of killing her.

Well...if the girl had placed the diadem on her head, and if the diadem had in truth been a sort of 'knowledge compendium' then

she could have learned that Henry was her half-brother. Meaning she opened a can of worms she shouldn't have opened...

Which would then lead to another question: why did the girl have to run away from her mother? Why not just stay there and face her? Unless, of course, the mother would go to great lengths to hide it...which gives us a sort of Games of Thrones feel, doesn't it? The most pessimistic of you have already formed (by now I hope) the 'true' way things devolved in the forest that brought to the death of Henry and Helena. If you haven't, then this entire 'book' is dedicated to getting to the end of it. So expect Founders-Era snippets eventually.

Time-Turner Shade-Version:

The Time Turner in the books 'moves' you back to where you were at the point it's turned. Not 'precisely' on the spot, but near it. That's the way 'Time' is displaced in this story. It's a sort of 'Copy' and 'Paste' of future self in the past. However, since I always get headaches when I have to read of future-past-present interactions, just see for the *Present Harry* and *Past Harry* tags. (Maybe a Future Harry eventually)

This is for my extreme clarity of writing and reading. As you may see from this chapter, the paintings and the ghosts returned on the same day Harry came back, because he futuristically went back in the past enough to reach school again sooner than his present counterpart. Sophie being sent to him to avoid him getting into trouble was the bird's own idea, because the bird is, importantly enough, his moral gauge.

Which in this year will be tested extremely.

Cookie points to those who know who Peeves is, but ultra-bonus points if you know What he is.

Omake Bonus Extra:

'Anagrams and their lovely options'

Tom Marvolo Riddle

Dammit Drool Lover (Stop loving the drool!)

Mild Doormat Lover (This is a fetish I suppose)

Immoral Voted Lord (And voted most immoral lord of all times is...)

Immortal Odd Lover (This kind of makes sense)

Immortal Loved Rod (this one sounds dirty)

Viral Motored Mold (A mold on a motor going viral?)

PS:

The proofreading tool, at the moment, is delightfully helpful with Hyphens and Passive sentences.

Not much else to say, except that I'm currently sporting a 38.5 degree fever, so if by happen chance something wasn't clear...*he shudders* just worry not, I'll get to the chapter for tomorrow eventually.

PPS:

Nearly forgot!

I'm asking here: does 'anyone' have a better summary in mind for this story? I'm absolutely tasteless in choosing them, and if someone wishes to provide a better one, feel free!

Harry Wylt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter 3

It took Harry a few moments to remember where he was. His eyes opened to the sight of rich, velvety green coloured sheets. A small chirping sound, the type one hears from small birds in their nests, reached his ear softly. His hand slowly patted around him, finding the threshold of the placed pillows and further along the soft plumage of the chick in question. His index finger barely probed the soft feeling baby phoenix that a sharp peck brought him to yelp and then stand up quickly.

"Ouch!" He hissed out in pain as he stood up, clutching his hand while letting his index out. It didn't bleed, but the pain was all there. He turned his inquiring gaze to where the small Sophie was, and he sharply breathed in. Yes, the events of the day before weren't just a bad dream. Peeves had truly talked to him. The Grey Lady's words rang true in his mind now, but the most dangerous ones were those not explicitly stated by Peeves.

The Poltergeist had ordered the Grey Lady to come and speak to him. He hadn't just 'delivered' the message: he had given an order. He had claimed he could kill him easily within the wards, but that whatever it was that he needed would require him. That the case, then it was something outside of Hogwarts that he had to find, something the Poltergeist could not reach easily.

Whatever the crown was, he had unwillingly accepted the bargain. He knew the ghost was probably still listening to him, still watching him, and if he didn't know better, he'd go as far as say the thing was still in the room. He gently grasped with both his hands the small baby Sophie, before placing her within the pocket of the Invisible cloak. It could hide a snake: certainly it would hide a baby phoenix.

He slowly clasped the invisible cloak over his neck, before doing the same with the invisibility one to appear invisible. He then took a deep breath, and walked back upstairs. He had slept in, and yet when he trudged just outside the Ravenclaw's common room, he realized it was barely seven in the morning. The door of the house of the witty looked at him appear from thin air, before asking him a riddle that the night before hadn't been there.

"Often talked of, never seen,
Ever coming, never been,
Daily looked for, never here,
Still approaching, coming near.
Thousands for its visit wait
But alas for their fate,
Tho' they expect me to appear,
They will never find me here."

He narrowed his eyes for a moment, before muttering.

"The Future."

The door creaked open and he stepped in, walking quietly towards the room's circular desk that once held many of the Owl and Newt corps students, and that now stood eerily quiet and deserted. It was just the first day, but he knew that no-one would ever sit down there anymore. His left hand gently trudged along the lines and circles of the wooden surface, his eyes closed as he hummed a soft tune. His fingers began to drum on the wood, as a small startled gasp caught his attention.

He opened his eyes to the sight of a dark-haired girl coming down the stairs, first to wake up and with a pair of shoes in her hand. She did, however, have a pair at her feet. He narrowed his eyes as he smiled at her.

"Lisa?" He said with a gentle tone as he took a step forward. The girl stilled, before widening her eyes and taking a step backwards. "Now that won't do at all." He snarled. His eyes narrowed as his wand was in his hand in a moment.

The girl tried to scream. It was a valiant effort, but Silencio didn't need tapping the subject to silence: it only needed a sharp jab sent towards the target. His wand added the fire pellet by its own accord, and as it flashed briefly against the girl's chest it exploded in a flutter

of ashes. The girl fell backwards. He didn't even flinch, just flicked his wand and called to his side the pair of shoes that indeed held both a name and a surname he knew of: Luna Lovegood.

"Lisa, Lisa...No Lisa, let me speak," he mockingly muttered as he looked at the girl's crying face. He walked near her slowly, making a small and gentle smile appear on his face to contrast her now tear stricken one. Really, playing with children was starting to annoy him: it was so easy to rile them up. Then again, he had been a child too hadn't he? He had cried far more times than ever and right there and then he just felt the need to actually give back a bit of all...of all that stuff. Violence for violence, blood for blood and righteous vengeance or whatever.

"I think you're being rude." He said, his wand moving in a 'no-no' motion right a few inches away from the girl's nose. "To pick on your roommate." He commented. "I wouldn't know about mines," although he did hope he was still with Michael and Anthony...he'd have a nice chat with them eventually. "But you? Picking on poor Luna? That's just tasteless."

He moved his wand as if to slash the girl, and with a surprisingly strong push the Ravenclaw barreled against the wall of the staircase. He didn't hear any crunches, so he hadn't probably been all that cruel. He felt a soft prickling sensation near his side, but ignored it in favour of slowly but surely morphing the tip of his wand into a whip.

"I wonder." He commented. "Should I whip you like an animal?" He offhandedly asked the question as he cracked the whip. Every second now someone else might come down, but seeing her tremble and shake, scaring her...well, that suddenly made him feel different. It was good. Everyone thought they could control him, give him orders, tell to him worthless and useless bits and pieces: here he was, giving it back to them. He was their King, and if he had to choose between a rule of respect and one of fear...

The Prince was extremely clear on which was preferred.

"You will attend the King's men club meeting." He snarled, pressing the side of his face close against hers. "And you will stop your petty bullying." He hissed, "Or I will delight myself," he whispered with a longing tone, "In killing you..." He was doing his best Smeagle imitation, "Slowly and painfully."

Then, slowly, he pushed her away from the side of the wall and brought his wand back to its normal form.

"Have I made myself clear?" He asked. The girl nodded furiously as she slowly crawled backwards, trying to go upstairs.

"Good." He said, flicking his wand and finishing the spell, before taking a step forward and giving her the hand. "Oh my! Let me help you back up! Nasty fall you had!"

She was about to scream, but his glare was perfect. He helped her back up just as a fifth year prefect came down. Her gaze lingered for but a moment on the two of them, before her face quickly went to a smile.

"Five points to Ravenclaw: glad to see chivalry isn't dead." The girl then left, and he smiled as he let go of Lisa's side, where hidden from view he had his wand pointed at her.

"Understand: I am not your equal." He murmured to the girl's ear, as he saw her slightly turn red from the embarrassing close position while the hair on the back of her neck rose. "I am your King."

Then he left her, turning to walk upstairs to his room. He entered it just as he saw Michael and Anthony start to wake up, but he didn't linger. He just grasped his books from the trunk with his bag and was out as fast as one could snap his own finger. He didn't realize he was holding Luna's shoes until he moved towards the door out of the common room. By then the blond-haired girl had already descended, probably because Lisa had woken her up going back in the common room.

He smiled at her as he handed the shoes over.

"Here you go." He said, "And if they give you any trouble," he murmured, "You just tell them I can do far worse."

Luna looked at him for a moment, then at her shoes. She seemed torn for but a second, before finally slipping them on her two differently coloured socks.

"You're not going to corrupt me are you?" She asked carefully, her gaze flicking from right to left, as if afraid of asking the question while staring at him in the eyes.

"Why would I? You're fine as you are." He replied with a small grin.

He had expected her to say thanks.

A handshake might have been within the norm, if a bit too normal coming from the girl.

He hadn't expected for the girl to encircle her arms around his neck and give him a quick peck on the cheek while giggling.

"Thanks, my knight in bronze." She winked at him, before quickly heading out. He blinked, his gaze after the lithe girl as she left the common room. He heard a sharp rustling of feet stomping down the stairs quickly, and the next instant he was face to face with Hermione who had apparently dressed up in a fury.

"Well?" She curtly snapped. "Let's go or we'll be late." She nearly barked the last words, as she headed towards the door. It took him a moment to realize she had talked to him, and by then the girl had already closed the door behind her strongly. He groaned as he rolled his eyes and began to follow: maybe Hermione was going through...that stuff.

He chuckled to himself as he descended the stairs, still hearing the low angry mumbling of Hermione followed by the girl's angry stomping. Whatever it was, it seemed particularly important to her, if she refused to speak with him. He reviewed his schedule as he descended the stairs. Since the school was in Scotland, vacation lasted until the fifth of January, which was a Wednesday

There was History of Magic in the morning and Herbology in the afternoon. He took a breath of relief at the fact that he'd see Professor Binns first thing in the morning: the ghost might be able to explain why Peeves held everyone under his thumb, and if not he might be subtle enough to drop hints during his lessons. It was as he passed a couple of portraits that he realized that something didn't add.

He probably should have asked. Hadn't they practically sacked Binns with the strike? If they had replaced the professor with someone else, then he might not have a contact with the Poltergeist...well, actually there were the portraits and the other ghosts, but it wouldn't be a helpful contact. Of course if Binns had just been playing along to earn his trust, then it was all a moot point to begin with.

He could trust Hermione and he could trust Luna. He could trust Draco and Ginny to a certain point. He could make Pansy and Lisa cooperate with enough strength, but he would not call them allies. 'Underlings' was the better term. He could probably force the King's men back to follow him, but he needed to make things clear, and to make things clear...

He needed a sure-fire way to understand who was on his side and who wasn't.

He passed by a reflection in an armour on his way towards the dining hall, and he stilled. 'What would King do?' was the right question, but not the morally correct one.

And somehow he knew the answer to that question. He knew it; he had learned it from the very best. He had grabbed it from the cold and uncaring hands of the fate bestowed upon him and he knew that all he had to do was learn it.

Once he did, however...

He doubted Sophie would ever look him in the eyes again.

It was the easy path, wasn't it? But if it worked...wasn't it just an added bonus?

Albus Dumbledore

His hand stilled from grasping a Lemon Drop. His fingers gently brushed the surface of a couple of them, before narrowing his eyes and quickly muttering an incantation for poisons. There were none, and so with a heartfelt sigh he grabbed the first sweet and popped it in his mouth. Not that dying was now a trouble. He knew better than Tom to just make Horcruxes out of important things in the world.

There was a Muggle now, in his house in Godric's Hollow, who held his scarf tied to its neck. The stasis charm that held him still also held the Horcrux ability at bay, and if he were to die...then he'd be back after a few excruciating hours spent devouring the soul of the unfortunate individual. The ties of Mr. Goyle and Miss. Clearwater stood on the cursed shelf he had bought off Borgin, a shelf that killed whoever dared to try to grab anything from its surface that didn't belong to him.

He'd need to place those two quickly in a safe place.

He had done the same with the souls of Miss Granger's parents. Her father's soul had been used for a seatbelt, of all things, while her mother helped instead with a lovely oven. Completely different Horcruxes, holding no whatsoever logical way that connected one to another, and all already displaced. They both stood under notice-me-not charms in their respective warehouses, readily shipped off to pre-planned people if he were to die and be gone for a determined amount of time.

He was at six now, counting himself. The Seventh was the last and the most important. He wanted it grand, to tie into the number seven that was magical by itself. Maybe he could try to enchant a stone from Stonehenge?

No. He shuddered as the windows of Hogwarts rattled. They didn't rattle because he had shuddered, but because he had thought. This was more than a mere thought gone wrong. There were things one could do, things one could talk of, think of, or just plain believe in without actually doing anything...then there were some things that were prohibited to be thought.

One was tarnishing Stonehenge; another was breaking the walls of China. Then there was awakening the ancient Sphinx of Egypt, burning down the hanging gardens of Babylonia, using as Inferi the bodies in the Kom el Shoqafa, extinguishing the fires of the lighthouse of Alexandria...and the gravest sin of them all: bringing back Atlantis.

Some things were just not done.

As he stood there, his eyes transfixed on a small silvery globe that contained a particularly powerful set of memories, he couldn't help

but display a slightly angry expression. There was a question he had always dreaded asking. There was an answer he had always dreaded receiving. Every time, however, it seemed he was receiving it all the same...and every time, he removed the memory.

The stone in his hand felt cool, but it soon began to burn like a scorching hot pyre as the door to the underworld shattered leaving behind nothing but its hinges. From it Ariana walked forth. He looked at her with a sad and tired gaze, and she looked back at him with a hateful face. Why was she hateful? Was this a reason for his hiding of the memory of all of their encounters?

"Albus." She hissed at him, and he recoiled as if struck. Surely his sister wouldn't hate him like that! Sweet Ariana had to know this was all for her good, right?

"Destroy the stone!" She screeched, "Before he comes and steals it! Albus! You already asked me all you could ask: destroy it! For the so called Greater Good you profess destroy the stone!"

He gasped for air as he stood up, holding tightly the stone as he locked eyes with Ariana.

"Who? Who wants the stone Ariana!? Answer me sister, please!"

The ghostly figure screamed in pure agony, reality and life burning at her soul for no dead soul should ever be brought back unwillingly. She shrieked out two last words, but with those words Albus' own soul rattled.

"THE KING!"

And then her body, her soul, her ghostly essence...was no more. He shivered as he felt a wave of cold settle over him, far stronger than a mere chill or a curse. The hands of death brushed over him, reclaiming the soul that was theirs to begin with. He wanted to snarl at them. He wanted to scream at them, but he could not. He dared not make himself known to Death.

And Death knew of course, the thing had to know and be amused, for it left the office, its shadow merely returning light and colours to their normal brilliance. The fire in the chimney crackled normally

once more, and as Dumbledore took a deep breath, he narrowed his eyes.

The King.

Harry Potter.

He had no choice then.

Before the year was over...

The boy would have to die.

Lillian Potter

Lavender Brown hated her. She was sure of it. Romilda Vane was a first year gossip. Parvati Patil was her direct evolution, and all three were her room-mates. She couldn't believe how things had changed: she had been at the centre of attention since her birth, but it had always been positive. Now, the rumour mill of Hogwarts claimed Dumbledore had bailed her out, defeating Salazar and giving the honour up so that Harry could be pardoned together with her, Hermione and Hagrid.

Hermione had been right: Gryffindor wasn't a safe place. It wasn't safe not because of the risk for a scuffle, since no student would dare to fight her after Dumbledore's words, but because words stung. The whispers in her direction were unbearable; the pointed fingers, the slight gazes where she went, the tensing when she walked closer. It was as if she was Voldemort herself. She hadn't done anything! Yet people believed she had nearly killed Draco. People believed she had nearly killed an auror and some people were actually explaining around how she had been the one to nearly kill Dumbledore too.

The fact everyone seemed convince she had purposefully cursed Malfoy didn't make it any better. The problem was that half the school was fine with it, but the other half wasn't. While nearly killing Malfoy was a good thing for the Gryffindors, nearly killing an auror and Dumbledore wasn't. Since nobody knew where she stood, their reactions were thus limited to point and whisper.

She was starting to get angry at it all. If only they'd come out with it, she could at least yell at them to stop spouting nonsense. Her way down towards breakfast just made things worse, as she tried to wave and smile at Ron, who instead steadfastly ignored her while talking with Dean Thomas. The dark-skinned boy hadn't turned, so it was possible Ron merely hadn't heard her.

"Ron!" She yelled a bit harder, as she clutched her book bag to her shoulder while running towards him. "Ron?" She asked this time, as the boy merely glanced over her for a moment, before turning his gaze away and heading down the stairs with Dean.

She bit her lip, before clenching her fists and stomping her right foot on the ground. The git wanted to ignore her? Fine! She'd get it out of him! She stomped down the stairs, ready to pummel the boy on the ground if he wouldn't listen, when she halted because a pale blond hair locked eyes with her. Ginny Weasley, no...Malfoy. The girl had heard of her now probably. She suddenly felt embarrassed and flustered. The once red-haired sister of Ron was looking at her with a mixture of disdain and disgust, which seemed to morph into a sneer that would have made Draco proud.

"Potter." She snarled, "We need to talk."

"There's breakfast." She replied quickly, all thoughts on confronting the girl fleeing. She knew she was acting biased, but while Ron was wrong in his ignoring her, Ginny had all the rights being angry at her. She hadn't even gone to meet her and Draco on the train car. Harry had offered to bring her around, but she had refused. She had spent the rest of the trip alone then, moping.

Of course it was a dignified moping, but still...

"Breakfast can wait." Ginny snapped, "It's not like there's anything that has to grow on you...except fungi in your brain." She gritted her teeth at the insult, but did not take out her wand. It wouldn't do. The term had barely started. She couldn't just attack Ginny without a good reason. The girl knew it, and probably that was why she was talking to her now.

"I'm not in the mood." She retorted quickly, trying to shove Ginny aside as she began to walk. It was a mistake. It was a mistake

because Ginny didn't push back, instead letting her go...and then moving to follow her.

"Oh really? A pity then." The blond-haired girl commented, "Because I'm following you until you listen to me, and if I have to sit down at the Gryffindor's table, then so be it."

She stilled and took a deep breath.

"What is it, Ginny?" She finally relented.

"You nearly killed my brother." The girl replied calmly. There wasn't even anger in her voice. "My King would be sad if something were to happen to you, so I won't curse you." She added, as if it was an afterthought, "But," she hissed moving terribly closer to her, until their eyes were but inches away, "If something happens to Draco...I will kill you."

And then the girl moved to leave, only turning her head around one last time to whisper.

"I'm watching you, Lillian."

She dumbly nodded, before starting to walk mechanically towards the dining hall. Breakfast would be good. It could at least help her clear her mind.

As it turned out, breakfast wasn't good at all.

Harry Potter

He was sitting down, ready to eat breakfast, when a giant eagle flew in. The majestic bird flapped its wings a couple of times, before sending out a loud screeching sound and dropping, straight on his head...a hat.

"It's been a while." The hat commented. "Really a long while."

"How are you on my head?" He was starting to get the hang of strange events happening around him, and this one wasn't particularly gory or troublesome. The question kind of came naturally to his head too.

"You sent me here." The hat replied. "Found me, and sent me here. I'm actually my future self."

"So there's a present self of you somewhere, and a future-me somewhere?"

"Correct." The hat retorted. "And what grand adventures present me and future you did!"

"So...why did I send you back?" He found himself asking with a mental groan to go with him.

"Because you'll need future me to become present me."

"Mister Potter?" A voice drove him out of his silent talking with the hat, and as he brought it a bit above his head, he couldn't help but raise an eyebrow at the sight of Dumbledore peering at him from the staff table.

"Yes, Headmaster?" He asked back calmly.

"Is that, by chance, the sorting hat?" The old wizard asked with his grandfatherly tone.

"No, I'm just a replica." The sorting hat commented in his mind.

"He says he's just a replica." He said, "And that he's a gift from the Gryffindor Association against Salazar." The fact that the initials made the word GAS meant nothing, of course.

"I see." The Headmaster's eyes twinkled, "Well, I'm sure you'll be careful from now on with the gifts you receive from your admirers Mister Potter...many can be cursed."

He brought up an eyebrow, before nodding.

"Yes sir."

The hat, with the bobbing of his head, covered his eyes again. There was silence, before a set of loud chuckles soon escaped from a few students. The few became the many, and eventually everyone was laughing at his predicament of having a far bigger hat than his head.

"While we're at it." He began calmly, standing up even though his eyes weren't visible to the others. "I'd like to point out that the first meeting of the King's men will be held this Saturday, in the study hall. We will discuss our plans for the start of the year, everyone is welcomed."

There were a few snorts, but nothing that worried him much.

"Sit down." The hat exclaimed loudly in his head and as he moved, maybe a bit too fast, to obey, he heard the whizzing of a spell nearly strike him. He quickly removed the hat, only to look around surprised. Many in the room were watching with a sort of extremely shocked look the ceiling, where words stood carved in the place of the normal sky.

"The Heir of Merlin, Duke Wyllt, hereby claims the school of Hogwarts. Albus Dumbledore: your life is forfeit just like that of your beloved hero."

He looked in shock from the ceiling to professor Flitwick, who looked back at him with surprise. Hadn't they all gone to great lengths to keep the knowledge in check? What was the meaning of this? This was an outright insult at the man, a challenge. And the spell flung his way? It was as if...He closed his eyes.

If he had gone back in time to do this, then it came to effect that whatever it was the hat knew of it. If the hat knew of it, then why wasn't it speaking?

"I can't." The hat whispered to him. "I'm here to help you, but I can't tell you. It's not how it works."

"Was it me who did this?" He found himself asking.

"I can't tell you."

"Why not?"

"Because this never happened the first time around."

And Harry froze. This was the Future-Hat talking about things that the Future-Harry had done. He was Past-Harry. This was the Past. So if Future-hat hadn't seen this past...

It didn't make sense.

It didn't make sense at all and something was wrong.

And if something was so wrong that it could change the past...then either the Time-Turner was a lie, or something had gone horribly wrong in the future.

Future-Harry in Future-Time

"Harry...Harry please..." The whimper came as a pleading prayer. "I did what I had to..."

"No." He replied calmly. "No." He added as an afterthought. "Where is she?" He finally asked.

"I can't...She wouldn't say..."

"A pity then." His voice turned bored. "A real pity."

"Avada Kedavra."

Future-Harry in Present-Time

"Moss and stone." He snapped. "Only moss and stone." He added.

"Now, no need being such a party-pooper." The Hat retorted on his head. "This is such a wonderful vacation. So what if I was wrong?"

"Oh yeah." He snarled. "Really wonderful. Want a look?" The torch moved to the side, where the skull of a rotting skeleton stood. "I don't."

"Careful to the right. Tricky shot." The hat mockingly intoned. He swished his wand to the right, a jet of flames erupting as it turned to cinders the moving Inferi.

"Remind me, why am I doing this?" He asked back. As more of the undeads woke up and began to crawl their way out of their tombs.

"Because you love a nice good adventure in the depths of the earth?" The hat mocked back.

"Sometimes, just sometimes, I wonder why I do what I do." He groaned, before morphing the wand into a sword and grasping at Merlin's staff.

"IGNIS!"

Harry Potter

Class wasn't cancelled. History lesson came around. His eyes widened at the sight of a female professor, with dark long hair and light hazel eyes that stood with a nervous expression near the chalkboard. She looked as if she had started teaching since little, and she didn't seem comfortable around a classroom looking at her. He sat on a chair on the other side of the first rows, with Lillian and Hermione on one side and he on the other with Draco.

"Hello class." She began carefully, "My name is Greener Enjoin Graham, and I wish to be addressed as Professor Graham." She turned her gaze around, looking everywhere except at him. "I will be substituting the History of Magic professor."

"What happened? And why isn't Binns back?" Ron Weasley's voice came from the back rows, and the professor merely answered with distaste clearly evident in her voice.

"The original substitute of Professor Binns died at the start of the break." She commented out loud, "I am thus your substitute for this school year, but don't think even for a moment that I will let any of you slack off!" She hastily added.

"Now, can anyone tell me where the Tomb of Merlin is located?" She asked, catching by surprise the entire class. Somehow Harry had the feeling that this professor wasn't at all his contact with Peeves.

"No?" The professor raised an eyebrow: she probably expected some answer. He sent a look towards Hermione, sitting next to Lillian, who seemed torn between answering or not. She looked at him, and he nodded back to her.

"The Forest of Brocéliande, in France." She whispered.

"You are, Miss?" The professor asked kindly, misinterpreting Hermione's reticent for shyness.

"Granger madam."

"Well then, Miss Granger is right and yet wrong at the same time." The professor replied again. "The myth does place the tomb of Merlin in the forest of Brocéliande in France; however the problem is that Merlin, believing the tale, is not dead." The professor commented, "Merely asleep in a cave."

He snorted. He knew all too well where Merlin had been, and who had killed him in the end.

The question was if this was worth extra points during class or not.

"So then," the professor ignored his snort thankfully, "If there is not a tomb in Brocéliande, then what else is there?"

"The fountain of youth?" Hermione hazarded, "But it's not historically proved, and..."

"And why is that?" The woman asked, "Well, let me answer that Miss Granger. It will be five points to Ravenclaw anyway," the dark-haired professor commented. "The forest of Brocéliande is filled with different species, different weathers and different plants. People have acknowledged that it is sentient: it will redirect out muggles who lose themselves in the forest, just as well as stranded tourists. It will, however, entrap any wizard that comes to find the tomb of Merlin. So the question remains...where is Merlin's tomb?"

He knew the answer: in the sunken city of...

"Lourdes."

There were stares bugging at the professor now. Wide-eyed gazes looked at the woman as if she had grown another head.

"Or at least that's what I'd like to say: unfortunately the French Government refuses to tear down the cave of Lourdes and have a look within..." The professor chuckled, and soon the tension in the air lowered itself. The woman had told a joke. He sighed in relief. He had killed Merlin, hadn't he? So there wasn't a problem about...

And what if he hadn't?

The thought froze him.

He didn't see Merlin die. He didn't even speak so much more than a couple of words to the mad man.

So what if the man hadn't died? How did he end up on a beach in Wales? Had Sophie saved him? What if, instead, Merlin hadn't died...but then again: why leave him his staff? Why do that if he hadn't died?

Merlin was dead. He had killed him, and that was the end of the story.

He'd look for the crown that Peeves wanted during the summer, when the poltergeist decided to give him a hint on where to look for it. He'd have to start researching the history of Hogwarts, because he did need to find out who Peeves was...

But that was for later.

As he began scribbling notes down on the various mythical forests in the world, he found himself yawning if slightly in boredom.

Writing down information with quills was now extremely boring, when compared to burning down Inferi or wielding Excalibur...but he had to keep it up, didn't he?

He would be their perfect role-model student, of that he was sure.

Author's notes

Using LibreOffice for this chapter. Have no idea how it will be formatted by Ffnet.

On another note, I've rummaged around for a bit before finally coming up with it: Does anyone want a 'Break'='Events up till now' thing? I figure considering the amount of chapters and all, it wouldn't be a bad idea. Maybe also adding a sort of 'list' of questions that still need answering and make it a sort of 'special chapter' of sorts.

Since I've read a lot about things not being 'clear' if you have any and all questions, just pour them in on the reviews in a list or PM them, and I'll place them all in a follow-up chapter dedicated solely to answering them and giving a Timeline.

Another thing is that this 'books' time line is already written. I've not gone and wrote the chapters, but since the usage of time-turners makes even the simplest stories complicated, I had to. That means that if in this book you don't understand some things...just wait till the end, I even made graphs.

The History Teacher...argh...well...There's a spoilerific spoiler on her. It's not difficult, but it's an enormous one. As for why we're seeing Future-Harry in Present-Time, well that too is a spoiler.

To Guest, that is the secret of the Time-turner which will be explained at the end of the book. You are right: it should be impossible to 'not' change the past by going back. Let's hope my future explanation will be enough.

Harry Wylt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter 4

"You're sure there's nothing important going on today?" He muttered to the hat, who merely grinned from side to side before shaking its leather form. "So you'll be fine here?" He added. The chamber of Salazar now held a small ledger, atop which the hat stood half-awake and half-snoring.

"Just let me rest." The hat mumbled, "I feel as tired as the day I was created."

"Are you really sure you don't remember anything?" Harry hastily insisted. There was a small screeching noise, and baby-Sophie found herself wobbling on the floor of the Chamber of Secrets towards the two of them. She was probably hungry. He still wondered how the small thing had gone around the first time to regrow to her normal size, if this was her way every single time. He gently picked her up, before grasping from within his pocket a few seeds.

Sophie began to nick at them, while he waited for the hat to answer.

"Not much," the hat admitted, "Only something about moss and stone." He added. "And even if there was something I'm keeping to myself, I wouldn't tell you."

"I give up." He'd have brought both his hands up in the air, if it weren't for the fact he was holding Sophie with one of them and her food with the other. "So all I know now is that you are from the future, and that your present self was taken by future me for some reason, leaving you behind to be taken by me. Good. I'm starting to feel a head-ache coming around. Just how is that possible? Shouldn't something happen if, you know, future me takes present you and leaves future-you behind?"

"Ah, no." The hat commented. "He dropped me off and took the other me. So when you'll go around you'll just drop me off and take him too."

"But how will you find your way to me then?" He narrowed his eyes.

"That's for me to know." The Hat retorted. "Stop thinking that hard and try to come up for a reason the past is changing."

"Well, obviously future-me did something in the past." He said, "And whatever it is I'll discover it eventually, won't I?" Sophie chirped, indicating she was full and ready to be left back on the luscious green carpet of the Chamber of Secrets.

"I really don't want to face the rest of the world." He mused over, "But it's not like I have a choice." He shrugged, standing up and walking towards one of the exits of the chamber of secrets. "Be a good girl while I'm out, Sophie!"

There was an indignant shriek of reply, and he grinned.

Ruffling the feathers of a phoenix left him in a good mood, and as he trudged out towards Herbology, he chuckled. Hermione and Lillian were both standing side by side, both with their arms crossed and looking distinctively peeved at something. Behind them Draco was holding the course's book, doing his best to appear as disinterested as possible.

The future would eventually come to terms with him: at the moment, he had better things to do. Professor Sprout welcomed the four students into the greenhouse just like the rest, her gaze hovering like a worried mother from him to Hermione, but resting particularly upon Lillian. His sister didn't seem to like the smothering, especially when coupled with the words 'dear' and 'poor thing'. The fact that the girl-who-lived was controlled by Grindelwald before the start of the break was known to the staff, and the student population would learn it with time.

Somehow this slight 'behind the schedule' thing of Dumbledore in warning the school of Lillian's innocence seemed planned. More than planned, it seemed done with a clear-cut defined reason in his mind. Ronald Weasley's face did look a strange mixture of red and purple after hearing for the nineteenth time about how Imperius could control even the strongest wizard. It was only a matter of time, he supposed, before he realized that Lillian was innocent and...

"We all bloody know all right!?" He yelled at Professor Sprout, who looked shocked by such an outburst. "They're Potters so they're innocents! The Headmaster doesn't even need to do anything since

it's the Potters! Damn Potter-Heroes! They're evil both of them, gone dark and future Dark Lords and here you are sucking it up to them and I..."

"Mister Weasley!" Professor Sprout screeched back, "Such appalling behavior is out of..."

"Shut up!" Ron yelled back, "I've had enough of it! You can't believe he defeated Salazar! He's a pathological excuse of a wizard! He couldn't even use the Wingardium Leviosa in first year and now he's a big and tough Founder killer!? It's all lies!"

"Mister Weasley that will be twenty-five points from Gryffindor for cheek, insulting a schoolmate and..."

"He's not my bloody schoolmate!" Ron screamed again, his wand out and pointed at him. "He's a damn fuckin..."

"Incarcerous!"

"Expelliarmus!"

Ron had his gaze busy with the professor, and thus missed the rope that suddenly surrounded him from one side, courtesy of an extremely angry-looking Draco Malfoy, and the shot of red light from Hermione's own wand that sent his wand to fly in the air.

"If you dare point a wand at my King again, Weasley, I'll kill you!" Draco sneered angrily, as Hermione's own gaze seemed murderous too.

"Mister Malfoy! Miss Granger! No pointing wands at one another!" Professor Sprout was breathing raggedly, and in that moment, Harry struck.

"I'm sorry." He said calmly, but loud enough for everyone to hear. His wand was out slowly, and as he muttered a "Finite Incantatem." He made his way towards Ron, silently Accio-ing with his wand that of the red-haired boy.

"I'm extremely sorry for this, professor Sprout." He added then, bowing his head to the Herbology professor, as he brought forth his hand with the Weasley's wand to the boy in question. "If it will make

you feel better, you can hit me." He added calmly, looking into the eyes of the boy.

"Mister Potter..."

"I'm sorry Professor Sprout," he added again, "This lesson is getting disrupted because of me, but I fear that if we don't solve this now it might get even worse." He added carefully, with his best contrite tone. "We must stand together once more, and if I'm at fault then...then I'll gladly pay. Here: your wand, Weasley." He nudged his open hand with the boy's wand a bit more.

The red-haired Gryffindor grabbed it angrily, before pointing it at him again.

"Mister Weasley!"

"Ron!" Lillian's voice came with a shocked tone, but Harry merely raised his right hand in a gesture of 'don't bother'.

"You're a dark lord." Ron muttered with conviction in his tone.

He looked back at him with what he hoped was a sad gaze, before smiling as gently as he could.

"Then hit me. I'm not going to defend myself. If you believe, truly, that I'm such an evil person, then I must have done something bad to you and for that I am sorry."

"This is all an act." He hissed back. "You're evil and you know it!"

"Mister Weasley..." Professor Sprout was standing there, with her face in a mixture of worry now, more than anger.

"No! No. He's just playing you!" Ron added, looking around for a moment, "Can't you all see it!?" He yelled, but the students in the greenhouse did not, in fact, see. All they saw was a boy believed the defeater of Salazar doing a courageous and righteous thing. Harry had even gone as far as putting his wand away and opening both of his arms wide.

"What is there to see?" He asked as gently as he could, "Look at me, Ron. Do you think I'm really a Dark Lord? And what of Lillian? Weren't you friends with her?"

"This is an act of yours." Ron parroted again, his wand jabbing in Lillian's direction, "You corrupted her too!" There a tone of hurt in his voice that made Harry's mind click.

"Ah...I see." He whispered. "This is because of Ginny, right?" He added.

The boy's eyes widened, before he clenched more tightly on his wand. "She's got nothing to do with it." He hissed.

"It's all right," he whispered back. "You can jinx me, or hex me, or curse me. I won't fight back. Neither will Hermione or Draco." He added, "I won't press charges or anything. If you really believe I'm evil, if you really believe it's my fault...then here I am. Hit me."

"Harry!" Hermione exclaimed, "You can't be serious!"

"Hermione," he retorted calmly. "This circle of hatred has to end." He turned for a brief second to gaze at her with a sharp glare. "If he'll be happy after cursing me, then so be it. This is dangerous: think if something were to happen at Potions, or while practicing spells in Defense? Thankfully this came out today, at Herbology. No offense to Professor Sprout, but I believe we can waste a few minutes solving this problem and the plants won't run away."

"You are right, Mister Potter." The professor replied. She was now starting to display a slight smile on her lips.

"So, Ron," he turned his gaze back to the boy. "What will it be?" He pressed on, "You can lower your wand and walk back to your housemates. This doesn't make you any less brave or courageous."

"You..." Ron muttered, slowly lowering his wand. Then, faster than Harry could see, the red-haired boy's fist flew forward and with a sickening crunch broke his nose, sending him on the ground with a sharp thud.

"There you go. I hit you. Are you bloody happy now?" The Gryffindor snarled. "I'm not buying into whatever filthy nonsense of words

you're spouting, Potter! You're not a hero and you're not of the Light!"

"Mister Weasley!" Professor Sprout was now positively angered. "It will be fifty points from Gryffindor, and three weeks of detention with Filch!"

"Still worth it," the boy spat out.

Harry didn't hear much of that, as he was helped up by Draco and Hermione, while Lillian pressed a handkerchief against his bleeding nose.

"Ouch that hurts!" He whined as he grasped for the piece of fabric, since Lillian's action was more likely to cave in his nose than help stop the bleeding.

"Madam Pomfrey should see you, child," Professor Sprout commented. He quietly was about to shake his head, when he suddenly widened his eyes and then nodded meekly. He could probably use the Time-Turner there and then, go back in time and find out who had written on the walls. His hand clasped subconsciously around the small metal thing in his cloak's pocket.

"I'll go with him." Hermione commented faster than Draco, or Lillian for what it mattered, could. She grasped tightly at his arm, and began to carry him out of the greenhouse before he even could say anything.

They were halfway walking towards the castle, when the girl muttered.

"I'm going to curse Ron." Her voice betrayed no emotions, yet he did feel that merely stating those words had lowered the temperature around them by a few degrees. "He hit you."

"I asked him to." He replied. "I thought he wouldn't actually hit me, more like curse me."

"Because that's better." Hermione whispered.

"It is." Harry replied calmly, "You would have probably known any counter-curse to whatever jinx the Weasley-spawn could throw." He

slowly removed the bloodied handkerchief from his face. "Can you use Epskey?"

Hermione bit her lip, before nodding quickly and pointing her wand at his face.

The next moment a sharp burning pain encompassed his face that soon dwindled down to a pleasant heat. It was as if someone has scrubbed his nose with a warm amount of alcohol, because his cheeks felt as heated as if he had drunk something of the sort.

"Good." He muttered, before grasping the Time-Turner. "See you around the corner." He hastily added while handing over to her his invisible cloak and letting the invisibility one start its work.

The next moment, he was no longer there. Hermione's face showed surprise, but that wasn't the last thing he saw. It was a look of hurt that passed through the girl's eyes that he had never seen before. He frowned, but as the feeling of being smashed by the cogs of time took his mind, he decided to let it be for the moment.

Time stretched and broke, as he filtered through his way to the past. He opened his eyes, closed from the time travel.

He was in the past.

Precisely, he was at the morning breakfast, with the ceiling yet untouched. Invisible as he was, he saw the talking hat already down on his past-self face, and brought up his wand before he could really think about it. The spell that dazzled out of his wand was but a mere jinx that however his past self ducked quickly. He gave another twist at the Time Turner before anyone could understand where the spell had departed from...and in that moment he saw the ceiling morph.

And he was gone once more, appearing straight outside the common room of the Ravenclaws as the clock ticked his morning of pushing Lisa Turpin down...

Hastily, he hissed the opening words to the Chamber of Secrets door. He walked through it with ease, heading towards the door that would lead him to the room of requirements on the Seventh floor. He walked out, thrice in front of it, and then was in Hogsmeade before

anyone could say anything. He calmly made his way upstairs, and once outside...

He stilled.

How did he get to Gringotts there and then?

Gringotts was in Diagon Alley, in London. He'd need a portkey or apparition. He knew neither. He had an invisible cloak and had to be back in school at the very least in an hour.

He took a deep breath, trying to calm himself down. Maybe he hadn't gone that day, but on another one? Then again how would he have managed that? It wasn't...He groaned as he mentally insulted his own stupidity. He had Sophie! Well, not the Present-Sophie, but the Future-Sophie would certainly...IF he had gone back in the past with her later on, then at that precise moment...

Future-Harry in Present Time

"Why do we have to go through a forest?" He mumbled half sleepily to his fellow adventurer. "I mean...I have a phoenix."

"She's busy." The hat retorted. "Real busy."

"Oh right, visit to Gringotts." Harry snorted, "For all the good it gave us..."

Present-Harry

Sophie did, in fact, appear the moment he entered an alleyway away from others. It made sense. His future-self knew where he would be, and had thus sent his phoenix, travelling back in time with him, to help his past-self reach Gringotts. He didn't even want to know how those things happened, but frankly he didn't care. The next second, the sharp tug of fire brought him out of Hogsmeade with a grown up Sophie singing and right into his own office at Gringotts, where Griphook was still compiling paperwork.

The goblin merely brought up a hand, grunted, and then went back to write.

"Back again?"

He blinked. Probably the phoenix had made a noise.

"Again?" He asked.

"You just signed the deed for Hogwarts, not that Gringott will be thrilled about it, but it's your choice." Griphook shrugged. "Better that way in my opinion. I've always been one for shock-attacks."

"Can I see it?" He asked carefully. Griphook didn't even turn around, merely snapped his fingers as a bunch of important looking scrolls appeared in front of him, standing in mid-air as they levitated. There was his signature on them, or at least what he'd considered his signature as Duke Wyllt. It was a childish scribble, but it was his.

It could mean a lot of things.

For one, it could mean he actually went further back in time to sign it.

"So...I already signed it?" He asked.

"Yes." Griphook snorted, "You lost yourself in time? Happens to all the new guys who get a Time-Turner, probably you got a twist more somewhere in your future, and ended up a bit behind. Don't worry about it. It happens."

"If you say so." He shook his head, "Was I alone?"

"No." Griphook stopped writing, turning for a moment to look at him. "You had someone else with you. I did hear him curse. I didn't turn around though: this paperwork won't compile itself alone!"

"Oh, all right." He whispered, before hesitantly looking around. What could he do now? Go around Diagon Alley?

"Your future-self left you something by the way." Griphook commented, "Said you had to find it at Hogwarts."

"Did he tell you where?" He asked. His future self was starting to become a headache. Why couldn't he just write to him and tell him what to do? Was it really that difficult?

"Said you'd know the place." Griphook shrugged. "It would help you become better acquainted with yourself or something like that. Oh and he also added something 'from great powers'..."

"...comes great responsibilities." He muttered, frowning as he couldn't make much sense out of it all.

"Yes." Griphook then turned around, and went back to writing down on the paperwork.

Harry merely grimaced, before letting Sophie transport him in a shower of flames to the Chamber of Secrets. There he took a series of deep breaths, and still holding on to his invisibility cloak, he made his way towards the room of requirements an hour before his other self would reach it to go to Hogsmeade. He'd use it to reach the Founder's room and there, finally, he'd wait off until it would be time to see Hermione around the corner.

"Everything's so confusing." He muttered to Sophie, who now in grown up form looked at him sadly. "I mean...when did I go back in time to do that then and why?"

Sophie just chirped, before jumping down from his shoulder to flap her wings, and her over to the miniature depiction of Hogwarts. She thrilled happily at the sight of the castle, and then perched atop one of its towers.

"At least you're enjoying yourself." He muttered...before finally giving a good look at Sophie herself. The phoenix was an adult. It took months for it to happen. So he had used the Time-Turner months afterwards...at the start of summer vacation? What would need him to go back in time from the start of summer? Just how many hours would he end up wasting?

Well, at least now he had a timetable. He knew he'd end up going to the past.

He grasped from his school bag a parchment and a quill, and began to jolt down.

"Present me - Summer - Back in time - Signs Hogwarts' document."

"Present me - sent curse at myself in past."

"Future me - changed ceiling of Hogwarts."

"Present me - Harry Potter."

"Future me - Duke Wyllt."

He bit his lip as the thing began to make slightly more sense.

"Griphook says I went back in time with Hat to speak with him, I had grown up Sophie then and the hat. So Future me talked with him, signed deed, and sent Sophie my way." He nodded. That made sense.

It actually explained how he had managed to enter the dining hall unnoticed: using Sophie with the Invisible cloak avoided the sparks and the flames which he didn't have because the first time around he had given it to Hermione, and while the Invisibility cloak could hide, it did nothing for the noise. Then, after changing the ceiling, his future-self embarked on some sort of quest.

"Future hat however didn't know about ceiling change. Maybe because he wasn't on my head then? I delivered him later on? But if I did that he wouldn't claim of being ignorant of it 'the first time around'. Something happened. Something...changed the past?"

But if something actually changed the past and he was now in the present, then what about his future self? Would he change too? If he considered time like a flow of water in a tube, and then suddenly the tube morphed its shape, then the water that came out would assume a different shape too...but water would always remain water. It was only the tube that changed, and the form of the water.

The water remained water.

Harry would stay Harry.

At least...this was him theorizing on things he had no idea of.

Sophie suddenly sang, before disappearing in flames, probably going back to future-him.

He shook his head slowly. As a first day back at school, it was already starting to get heavy on the mind. He had yet to visit the infirmary though.

Hermione

Harry was acting strangely. She knew she was being paranoid, but it was the truth. Her King was doing just what he had said he would do, act like a good and innocent student, but he couldn't help but feel worried. He had just disappeared into nowhere but a moment before, and that sort of scared and thrilled her at the same time. Did Harry already know how to Apparate? He had seemingly twisted something within his cloak...maybe he had a portkey? Had he learned how to make them?

She had to catch up and fast. If this kept up, she'd be substituted by Draco of all people. The boy was already on his way to becoming Harry's right hand, and that place was hers. Just like being Harry's left hand. Sometimes, she even envisioned herself as his queen, albeit she did usually have those dreams at night. She felt heat rise to her cheek as she turned the corner and entered through the entrance hall, in time to see Harry walk out from behind the Architect's statue.

She looked at him with surprise, opening her eyes wide as she bit her lip. What was the deal with the statue?

"Harry?" She asked carefully.

"Hermione." He smiled at her, holding a parchment in his hand. "I was just thinking, since we've got time and all," he chuckled at his words. Maybe he had said a joke and she hadn't caught it? She felt stupid within a second, of course he had said a joke and she hadn't understood it! She nervously giggled, trying to sound as sincere as possible.

"Yes, Harry?" She asked.

"Maybe you..." Was he...was he going to confess? Suddenly the heat on her cheeks intensified. It was just the first day of school for the second term, but if he wanted to...well, no. She had to keep her cool and wait. She was probably misunderstanding something and it wouldn't do to get her hopes up.

Harry gestured towards the architect's statue and to her incredible surprise the statue lurched to life and moved downwards, opening its book and grabbing its golden quill as if to write something on it.

"State your name clearly Hermione," he commented, "Last time around it didn't work, but maybe this time it will."

Last time around? She raised an eyebrow in surprise. Had she done this already once? The thought of failing made her anxious, but still she managed to stutter out.

"Hermione Jean Granger." The statue blinked. Its golden eye-lids locking themselves with the girl, before he turned his book for her to see.

Written in the statue's calligraphy was her name.

Harry's face morphed into a puzzled one, before he whispered.

"Did Draco bring you here already?" He asked.

She frowned at Harry mentioning that. Of course he hadn't!

"No, why?"

"Never mind." He quickly said, maybe a bit too quickly. He was hiding something from her, and the thought hurt. It must have filtered through her eyes, because he gave her an awry smile. "Don't worry." He added. "I'll tell you eventually."

That was what scared her. He didn't need her for counsel. He didn't need her for anything. She wasn't even eye-candy. He'd probably just drop her to be Lillian's friend and become a second-rated ally. He wouldn't ask her to do things at all, he wouldn't speak to her at all, he would just leave her and she...she realized she was hyperventilating when Harry brought his hands on her shoulders, looking at her with concern.

For the love of Merlin she couldn't act that weak in front of him! It was frustrating.

"Hermione? Hermione are you all right?"

She didn't know why she did what she did, but in that moment, with him so close by and with the memories of Luna giving him a kiss on the cheek...she just fervently kissed him on the lips.

Future Harry

His right eyebrow twitched. His hand went to his staff, while Excalibur burst in flames.

"So we meet again." He commented. Broken bits of metal and half-torn limbs waved at him. This time he did have the high ground however. Standing atop a ragged looking hill of broken bricks of stone, he felt more and more like Gandalf facing the Balrog than Harry Potter facing a horde of Inferi. "Didn't they have variety in the past?" He groaned as the staff of Merlin sprouted its wicked thorns.

"This is the right tomb, right?" He finally queried the hat, which moved on his head for a moment before grumbling his confirmation.

"You know." He deadpanned as he looked at Sophie appearing in a ball of flames on his shoulder. "This is starting to get old."

Sophie merely trilled at him, before flapping her wings and flying like a veritable wall of flames against the Inferi. He grinned as a few turned to charcoal, but the smile soon morphed into a frown when a few of them...took out bows.

"Where the hell did they get bows!?" He yelled, as the staff of Merlin brought up a wall of thorns just as the arrows impacted against it.

"Stasis charms. Old buggers were quite keen on their equipment." The hat retorted, his voice serious as if he had eaten a sour lemon.

"I swear if this is another thing you forgot..." Harry muttered, before twisting the staff of Merlin and opening a passage big enough for him to see through, "I'm never going to forgive you. You know that?"

And then, as the hat muffled once more the same tired apology, finally, he roared with Excalibur in hand.

"IGNIS!"

Present Harry

The kiss felt moist. It felt strange. He could feel her lips softly upon his. He could feel her hands actually pressed against the sides of his head as if afraid he'd just move his head backwards and escape from her. His eyes widened in surprise when he finally understood that Hermione was kissing him. Her hands moved to the back of his head, as if truly, really fearing he would run away. It was sort of rough actually, but as a first kiss he didn't expect...

What did he expect to begin with?

He was being kissed.

Hermione was kissing him.

More than kissing though, he'd actually say she was trying to eat his lips out of his face.

He could actually feel the desperation oozing off the girl's entire body, as if this was her anchor, her safety blanket, her lifeline and so forth. It was as if she feared abandonment to its very core and...

And he understood that, and probably that was the problem.

Accused of wrongdoings not committed, and abandoned by your friends.

Accused of acts not of your fault, and abandoned by your family.

Accused, always accused, and her only defender? Him.

He probably would have done the same thing had the roles been reversed. Had she saved him, he'd have fought tooth and nail just because it would feel right to do so. Yet he didn't know how to do this. Where did one get a book that explained how to convince a girl without making her cry that you just didn't want a relationship?

What was worse was that he wasn't just extremely tempted to kiss back.

In truth, he was already by reflex kissing her back.

"Ahem!" There was a loud clap of hands and soon they separated. Embarrassingly, it had been the History professor to find them. The woman looked with a frown at both, her eyes gazing from him to Hermione and backwards. "There are broom closets." She deadpanned. "The entrance hall is really not the place to snog like animals in heat."

Hermione winced, before muttering. "I'm sorry professor, it was my..."

"It was my fault." Harry replied, putting a hand on Hermione's shoulder. "It won't happen again." He added. "I was just thanking Hermione for having used Episkey on my nose and making it better." He smiled.

"I see." Professor Graham narrowed her eyes, "well then, shouldn't you return to class then?"

"Er...Yes, professor." He quickly nodded, before grabbing Hermione by the hand and pulling her alongside him back outside. He stopped the run just as soon as they were clear from the entrance hall, and as he slowed down to a walk to catch his breath, he couldn't help but look at the girl who was clutching his hand as if her life depended on it.

"Hermione?" He asked her with hesitation; the girl was showing a sort of wide-eyed gaze to him. Probably she was just then realizing what she had done, and that seemed a good reason as any to suddenly hold on his hand as if she were a boa constrictor.

"Can you let go? You're hurting my hand." He muttered, and with a small eep Hermione did just that, before blushing and crossing her arms over her chest.

"I'm...I'm sorry." She whispered.

"For what?"

"For...I was being stupid." She finally relented. "I was...I felt...it doesn't matter." She turned to move to the greenhouses. He stopped her with a single word.

"Hermione." She stilled and turned. "It does matter."

"I..." The girl whispered. "I don't want to be left behind."

"I understand." He nodded. "But..."

"I should have known." She murmured with her head now low. "There was no way you'd fall for me, right? I'm not even half as pretty or feminine like Luna..." Her eyes widened, "Maybe she's your girlfriend and I...I'm sorry! I'll apologize and...if...if you don't want to see me anymore I'll...understand that." Her voice kept lowering until he finally sighed.

"Merlin..." He whispered, "You realize we don't have the time for...for this, right?" His hands went to his hair, "There is a lot this year...and really, adding this to the pile I..."

"I'm sorry." She turned her gaze sideways.

"It's all right." He took a deep breath, "But...I can't give you an answer." He said clearly, "Not now. Not yet. Heck, for all I know I might just end up dead by the end of this school year." And with that he chuckled grimly.

Merlin: why did this have to happen to him?

He knew of course, or at least had ignored the signs. He should have known that he couldn't just keep on ignoring the girl, but he had expected time, at least some time to think...And he felt tired. He had gone back in time more than once, and technically his biological clock was asking for him to fall asleep. The house elves, bless those creatures, didn't mind sending him food with a call, but sleep was something he needed.

"Let's get Herbology over with." He relented. "Saturday is at the end of the week." He confirmed more to himself than to anyone else. "We'll discuss things there."

He missed the meek 'All right' that Hermione muttered. His mind was already trying to come up with a good enough reason to gently let the girl down. He wasn't ready and there just wasn't time.

Irony, considering he held time in his pocket and its name was 'Time-Turner'.

Author's notes

s/9055061/1/Guide-to-Harry-Dursley-and-the-Chronicles-of-the-King

As said before, link above guides you to the guide for the first book. (Next books are coming) (or go to my profile and look for the title)

I tried to make it as easy to follow as possible, if I missed something remember that 'Errare humanum est' (To make mistakes is human)

Now, on to stop the barrage that will most likely be 'omg HPXHr fic!'

No.

Stop your horses. Calm your heads and remember that the definition of 'shipping' is when both sides actually love one another or do fluff stuff together. In this case, Harry is sort of the Parody of Voldemort, and Hermione is Bellatrix. She's not 'mad' per se, but she certainly does view Harry as 'hers' personally. Now, she's not going to butcher people in their sleep, but she will act upon the notion as she sees fit. She has, after all, no-one else who can truly be her friend/boyfriend whatever. Her relations with other boys are non-existent, Harry saved her multiple times, Lillian tries to one-up her because of childish jealousy for her brother, her parents died and the Potters are Dumbledore's allies.

She trusts Harry. What she actually would need is a psychiatric, but she'll have to make do.

Of course she might just...die...and then there would be no such pairing. But would I kill such a precious character?

...

Probably.

I'll be now going and working on the book 2 of the guide. See ya.

Harry Wyllt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter 5

Herbology passed as if a thick wool blanket had covered his entire body, sending him into a sort of lethargic state. It had probably to do with the increased time he was on, but he napped on the wood surface of the table of Professor Sprout, being lulled to sleep by the chatter coming from the students around him. He did wake up later, with an actual blanket over his shoulders as Herbology was over. Professor Sprout probably had thought Pomfrey had given him some sort of pain relief potion, and that had made him sleepy.

He groaned as he stretched, his eyes moving to where Draco and Lillian were and somehow finding himself glazing over Hermione, not knowing just what to tell the girl. So he said nothing, instead leaving the confrontation for later.

The four of them began to walk back towards the castle in an awkward silence that Draco was the first to interrupt.

"There's something I have to tell you, Harry." He said, his face turning contrite. "Do you have a moment?"

"Yes," he nodded back, everything just to get away from the awkward moment with Hermione.

"Well, I need to talk to you." Draco hastily said, turning his gaze towards Lillian and Hermione, "In private." Both girls frowned, but Lillian grasped Hermione by the arm and walked a bit away. "Really." The pale blond boy added as the two girls had barely taken a few steps.

In the end the two girls went ahead, entering the castle and leaving Draco and him in the entrance way. Harry looked at him, before gesturing towards the Architect statue. With a knowing nod, the Malfoy heir followed him behind it, and in the Founder's room.

"All right." Harry began calmly, "What's the matter?"

"I'm in a mess." The boy blurted out, his hands clenching as his eyes began to tear up. "A truly horrible mess."

"Calm down and start from the beginning," he whispered, his eyes roaming over Draco's form in search of some sort of physical problem. He couldn't watch another one of his friends in the eyes crack up, not after already dealing with Hermione.

"I...Look, I know..." Draco didn't apparently even know how to start talking, and so Harry sighed and nodded.

"Calm down and take a breather Draco. Then start from where you're comfortable."

"The Dark Lord wants me to dose you with Amortentia before the school year ends." The boy blurted out quickly.

"...what?" Harry's eyes opened wide and in shock, what the...

"Look, I don't know." Draco hissed, "I know he wants me to, but I don't know why. He even provided me with two vials. Two! He...I think he..."

"No, calm down." Harry muttered, "You can't be serious. The Dark Lord wants me to fall in love? Listen Draco, this is a tasteless joke, really. It's one of the most horrible ones I've ever heard and..."

"I'm not joking." The boy yelled back, "And he says that if there aren't...if there aren't results...he'll kill my mother." He whispered.

"Results?" Harry was literally choking on his spit. "Results!? Who the hell does he think he is!? A match-making agency!?" He didn't know whether this was a funny thing or an extremely sad one. The Dark Lord, Voldemort, wanted him to fall in love with someone! What for, to be the godfather of his...

His eyes widened.

"Draco," he muttered, "He didn't tell you why, but what results is he expecting?"

The boy's eyes widened, before a slight red colored his cheeks.

"Well...a scandal I suppose? I mean you're a hero now, and if you're considered a fiend then..."

He shook his head.

"Draco." He commented. "Do you remember in first year? The book on blood purity?"

"The one my grandfather wrote?" Draco asked back perplexed.

"Yes, that one." He admitted. "I thought about it, and I suppose it worked on magical signatures right? It wouldn't open for a muggle." He commented.

"I suppose since it was meant for Purebloods, it required to have both parents magical...I'm just theorizing it mind you," Draco hastily added, "You think the Dark Lord wants your blood?"

"I think he wants my heir." Harry chuckled, understanding lighting in his eyes. "More specifically: Ravenclaw. I'm the last." He pointed out. "That's probably why the book showed everything to me."

"Why would he need a Ravenclaw heir?" Draco's face became puzzled. "I mean, why the interest?"

He shrugged. "Probably he needs it for some ritual. My son would be the heir of all four founder houses, you know?"

Draco's eyes widened in surprise and Harry had to repress a chuckle.

"You? All four? H...How?"

"Slytherin and Ravenclaw came to me from the Dursley," he muttered, "They adopted me." He cracked a small smile, "Hufflepuff came through adoption too, and as for Gryffindor, well I hope it's from blood." He brought up the hand with the ring of Merlin. "And I'm also the chosen of Merlin, which makes me Duke Wyllt."

Draco's face paled.

"You're the one responsible for this morning mess!? Why did you..." The boy's voice lowered itself greatly. "Why did you tell me this!? What if Dumbledore or someone else hears you?"

Harry shook his head.

"Misdirection." He commented, "And Duke Wyllt is doing something at the moment. I've been given...a boon, shall we say?" He smiled, "Which makes me able to be in two places at the same time." He added.

Draco raised an eyebrow, before shaking his head.

"Anyway, what do we do now?"

"Well Draco," he hesitated. "You learn Occlumency."

"Already know it." He replied quickly, "The Dark Lord clearly didn't want me back here with the knowledge easily exploitable, would he?"

"Ah, but he would have you make an unbreakable vow then, wouldn't he?" To that question, that he had actually asked with a small smile on his face, Draco replied by clenching his hands and paling even more.

"Draco." He whispered in disbelief.

"It's not..."

"Draco." He hissed in determination.

"I can't..."

"Draco Malfoy: what the hell!?" He screamed. "You can't seriously..." His hands went to his hair, "No really...This...That...What, no don't answer me." He retorted calmly, bringing up his right hand to stop the blond-haired boy from saying anything.

"Don't nod or anything all right? So the Dark Lord wants me to believe that you wish for me dosed with Amortentia!?" He was actually laying it thickly there, but when Draco averted his eyes Harry just knew he had actually grasped the truth.

"And he would want that, because he'd then know I'd trust you." He continued, "And then I'd give you my plans." He retorted, "And then he'd know them and knew when to strike."

He took a deep breath.

"Will you come and watch the Quidditch match of end term with me, Draco?" He asked calmly.

"Of course." Draco's eyes widened as he replied.

"And next year?"

"I might be busy." He hastily murmured.

"Oh, I understand." Harry finally nodded. All right: Voldemort's plan would be for the year after this one. Strangely for once he was actually acting, rather than reacting, to threats. It should make him happy: it actually didn't.

"Let's get going. I have an appointment with Filch and you can give Amortentia to Weasley and, I don't know, pick someone you don't like." Draco nodded sagely, and with that final decision they both walked out of the room.

"I'll have to feign being in love." He muttered. "Backstab a hero and a dark lord, and while I'm at it try to understand how my future self fucked up the time line." He chuckled.

"Wonderful."

He passed by the dining hall together with Draco, his gaze roving over the ghosts who seemed to be doing nothing more than floating around lazily. Their gazes however unnerved him. Why were they all staring at him? It wasn't a coincidence and it couldn't be one.

"Beg your pardon." A rich and cultured voice proclaimed from a nearby painting, "But tonight a meeting is held for your grace in the room of requirements." Harry nearly hissed a choked curse at the painted knight: if not for the complete lack of people around him, barring Draco, he would have actually destroyed it.

"Wonderful." He whispered. "Just plain wonderful."

Argus Filch

The tea was ready and the biscuits warm. Sure, many might have never believed anything about him being gentle and a wonderful host, especially the students he punished, but that didn't change the fact he had grown up in a proper house; a wizardry house where of course everyone could use magic, everyone except him. There was a reason why they called them Squibs and not simply Muggles. A muggle would be repelled by the anti-muggle wards: a Squib wasn't.

A muggle would be unable to even develop magical photos, a Squib could. Squib, putting it simply, were unable to use wands. This didn't make them less magical, as the books on 'Prevent Squib Suicide' proclaimed, but it didn't them wizard. Forced to live in a wizard society, few were the squibs who weren't bitter.

Actually, many simply renounced magic to begin with: having a nice and healthy muggle life wasn't bad. Sure, maybe your son might become magical and what not, but putting a nice and heavy stone over 'magic' was the only way to keep one's own happiness. He didn't like the children of wizards. They believed magic was theirs to do as they pleased. They used spells without thinking, pranking as if it was their right to do so.

Just because one has the tools to make chaos doesn't mean one should make chaos. He didn't hate wizards: he hated the stupidity in them. He was the oldest in his family, and yet he still remembered when he had simply been bypassed for the inheritance laws. Everything had gone to Elizabeth, his young sister. She was the middle of the runt, but while she certainly wasn't much special in looks she at the very least had magic.

For the ministry it was enough to call for him, and his brother, dead to the eyes of the law. The woman still did divide the money fairly, even though she could have ignored the will of their parents. She was a witch, but that didn't really make her an evil cursing woman like the folklore had them. They weren't Purebloods or even remotely rich like those big blokes. No seat in the Wizengamot and nothing more than a dingy house that had seen the Filch family grow in.

The job at Hogwarts was one of the most paid ones. For a long time he had actually wondered why they had given it to him instead of giving it to a wizard. A wizard would have probably been thrilled to work in Hogwarts even as a caretaker, and any mess would end up

cleaned easily and quickly with the flick of a wand. He had gotten his answer from the Headmaster once, and it had merely been 'because the law says so'.

In his humble opinion, it was mostly because by having a Squib as a caretaker, the punishments would not be under the form of curses or jinxes but merely cleaning around the castle. The castle was magical to begin with: did people really think he had to go around and clean messes if he didn't want to? He could snap his fingers and the brooms themselves would immediately take to the job.

The reason he did his work manually was because otherwise he'd feel like a thief. He got paid and he had a place to sleep: it didn't sit tight with him to do all of this for no work at all. He patrolled the corridor when the paintings could do the same. He cleaned even though he shouldn't even need to...and he did all that because he, Argus Filch, was not a thief.

There was a knock, polite as always, and as he merely grunted to come in he looked up from the tray to stare into those dark green eyes that had mesmerized him once.

He had seen many students go around Hogwarts in his years. Some he knew by a feeling would turn out like rotten apples. Others he had seen act with great responsibility and become aurors, healers or hit-wizards. He had read the diaries of the past caretakers, the tales they spun of the power some students had held and the respect they had shown.

Albus Dumbledore had always been a polite Gryffindor, Tom Riddle had shown himself as a gentle Slytherin, and he knew that a certain Augusta Longbottom, who had become a very important person in the Wizengamot, was actually profusely glorified by the caretaker of her period. In his own diary, he had already begun to write the tale of Harry Dursley, the determined Ravenclaw.

"Mister Filch," Harry began as politely as always, hesitating just a moment before taking the free seat. Mrs. Norris was already meowing and jumping on his lap by then, and he couldn't help but crack a smile as he saw the boy pet the cat's head.

"Call me Argus," he replied with a smile. "Reckon you earned it after saving my life."

"I didn't..." The boy said, starting to probably act all meek and humble.

"Oh yes you did," he insisted. "Wasn't it for you, what do you think Salazar would have done to me or the muggleborns?" He shook his head. "You saved us all. Pity for Hagrid, he probably doesn't know about the pardon."

The boy merely nodded, and then began to talk about the school. He replied in kind, answering a few questions on what had happened during the time of chaos before the start of the winter break.

"It was a bloody thing," he whispered to the boy, who seemed enraptured by the tale, "It was in the hall of armors you see: those things have their halberds sharp and working. I told the professors it was just inviting danger, but they said that applying charms would take time and might not work forever. Said some bullshit about the castle preventing the suits from falling down on students walking by...for all that it helped the Goyle guy."

"He was found there?" Harry asked carefully.

"Yeah. There he was lad: torn piece by piece and chopped like you don't know. The armors attacked him when he attacked the Headmaster. Dumbledore did try to stop them, but the castle magic just went her way. There are powerful wards around Hogwarts, you know?"

The boy nodded thoughtfully.

"The Ravenclaw girl, Clearwater if I'm right...poor girl. Pretty much like the Goyle boy, only with more blood. Crucified to the Egyptian corridor, horrible fate...she bled out with no way to help her. The Headmaster still hears her scream when he walks by: he told me so."

"I...see." The boy whispered, looking visibly sickened.

"Enough of this depressing talk," he grumbled. "So lad, tell me how you're coping with all this coming down on you. I suppose being a hero is a tough job."

The boy shook his head, before putting down the now empty cup.

"Not much actually." His voice is now monotone, and he can't help but feel a bit of regret at what he's about to do.

Argus Filch, squib caretaker of Hogwarts, closed his eyes for a moment.

"What is your name?"

"Harry Dursley." The boy replied calmly, the eyes glazed over as the Veritaserum within the tea took hold. He wouldn't even remember anything afterwards: that was how it worked. How it had always worked.

"Are you Duke Wyllt?" He asked, calmly taking a pen and scribbling the name the boy considered himself with. He didn't know why he had to do this, but for what he was promised...He'd do it. There were few things that would make him move, fewer even that would call for his loyalty: but what Voldemort offered him, a mere squib...that was something he would sell his soul to the devil for.

"Yes." The boy replied and he couldn't help but smile.

"What is your opinion on Voldemort?" He asked.

"He wants to kill me: so I'll kill him first." Harry replied calmly. There was no-show of emotion in the boy's voice, just like the veritaserum should work.

"What about Dumbledore?" Argus asked again.

"He has to die too." The reply did not come unexpected, but now the caretaker was starting to see the truth behind the boy's face...and Voldemort would see it too.

"Why?"

"He betrayed me." This time the words came out as a whisper, but he understood them. He understood them far more than what he would have liked to.

"Those who betray you have to die?" He asked.

"Yes."

The temperature in the room had dropped to a chilling point now.

He could feel Mrs. Norris start to hiss and jump away from the boy's lap. He could actually see the boy's face morph into an angry scowl, and within seconds...

A flash of light and flames, a single word.

"Obliviate."

And he saw no more than a smiling Harry begging his goodbye. They had talked about random topics, and he hadn't managed to give him the Veritaserum. The Dark Lord would understand...as long as he didn't know it.

Harry Potter

"So I learned the spell." He muttered to the empty corridor.

"That you did." The reply came in his voice, and yet at the same time it was huskier, darker and far more mature than his. "That, and much more."

"How did the time line break?" He asked.

"Did it now?" The other him replied with a teasing tone.

"How could it not?"

"Future-Hat might have lied." His future-self commented. "Or he might have told the truth."

"And why would the Hat lie?" He found himself asking.

"Because he's not your friend." Future-Harry replied, "He never was and never will be."

"So I shouldn't trust him?"

"Precisely." There was an air of finality in those words that made him wince.

"What did he do?"

"He freed something that wasn't meant to be freed." The tone was angry now. "I lost...We lost...everything."

"You can't change the past." He deadpanned. "So...you're just condemning me to know in advance."

"Think what you want." His Future-self retorted. "But there is a way to change it. I've seen it. I've felt it. That's why I've come back."

"You can't mingle with the past!" Harry hissed.

"But you can kill your past self." His Future-self coolly whispered. The hallway they were walking in was now deserted, no paintings surrounded them and no ghosts lingered by, "And if the death of one may save the lives of thousands..."

His face paled. His features morphed into fear and fright. His own self of the future wanted him dead? To save thousands? What...why would he...what had he done?

"What did I do?" He croaked out, quietly moving to grab his wand. If he went for it however, wouldn't his future-self already know?

"We had this conversation once." Future-him replied, from his invisible spot. "We both know how it will end."

"So I'll live." He sighed in relief.

"Normally, yes." Future-him admitted. "Things have changed however. The past has changed."

He spun around quickly, his wand out and ready.

He had expected a barrage of spells. He had expected his future self to keep to the invisibility cloak. He hadn't expected him to emerge from his hiding spot.

His hair was black and long, reaching midway to his shoulders. His eyes were pools of dark green, scars surrounding his cheeks coupled with a broken lip. He stood tall, taller than his biological father certainly. His shoulders squared and he held a wand in his hand that was half-singed, as if it had burned. Half of his body was visible, not dressed in a robe but in one of those old Roman-style Togae of a dark purple color.

"Purple is the color of nobility." He offhandedly remarked. His right hand held the signs of deep scarring related to fire, while his left one appeared to have been badly broken and then put back together. On his shoulder stood Sophie, the old and aged Sophie, burning brightly as if she was nothing more than a torch. Her cries of pain seemed muffled by a spell, and yet she didn't seem able to leave the source of her pain.

"What..."

"What happened to me?" He said with a bright smile. "Well, Fiendfyre is all good and dandy, until you lose control of it."

"Fiendfyre?" He choked. "I tried that first?"

"Oh, you also did try Faefyre, Angelfyre, fyre, Nordfyre, and half a dozen of types of different fires and scorch spells." His older self amusedly replied. "You know what they call me?" He added.

"I think you're going to tell me." He admitted quickly. If he got him to talk, then maybe he could dash in the nearest room.

"Yes, last time I did just that. Looking for a way out aren't you?" Future-Harry smiled, as he flicked the half-singed wand. Past-Harry's back suddenly felt the heat as his back was scorched, and with a loud scream of pain he jumped forward.

"Too late." Future-Harry snapped.

In that moment, Past-Harry grasped at the only thing he knew would work: the Time-Turner. He spun it without watching and was soon gone from there, instead landing roughly on the patch of grass outside of the greenhouses. He gasped for air as he gurgled the acid feeling in his stomach. His future-self wanted to kill him, but he had escaped.

His future-self wanted him dead. What had he done? It had to be something horrible, if suicide became such an option. He had to get out of there before...

"Going somewhere?" His future-self asked amused. Of course his future-self would know where his past-self ended up. He jumped forward, running as he tried to make his way into the forbidden forest. He felt spells whiz past him, some landing on the ground and making it split apart. He remembered that spell: Excudo, wasn't it?

In the future, he apparently knew how to fling them silently. The only noise around them as he ventured deeper into the forest was the explosion of the wooden bark and the cracking of the earth surface apart. He could hear his future-self chuckle, as if he was just enjoying himself.

He stopped near a tree, his breath ragged as he tried to breathe in the resin filled air of the forest. He collapsed against the wooden trunk of an old oak, his body covered in sweat. He could survive this, he knew he could. His future-self was proof enough he could do this, if he ever got out of the first day of school. It was still the first day. He had already been back in time more than a dozen of times at least, and if he wasn't then it certainly felt like it. Was that the reason his future-self appeared so aged?

Had he abused the Time-Turner?

A sudden wave of heat was all he felt, before scorching white fire descended upon his location. He pushed himself away from the trunk and rolled on the ground, hitting with his back a root and watching too close for his personal tastes as the old oak burned to a crisp. The fire consumed it ravenously, so white it was blinding to watch.

"You can't run and you can't hide." His future-self sung, "From your mistakes and from your pride." There was something eerily familiar in that voice that made him shudder. It was his, wasn't it? Yet at the same time it felt so...so wrong. "I have come to set things right," the voice was drawing closer now, "I have come to end this blight."

The wand was there, pointed at him. He grasped his own and shakily stood.

"A duel then?" The Future-him commented, "A duel it is!" He added. "Come on past-me, let me show you what you will never be!"

And then Future-Him roared as fire formed from his singed wand, the burst of heat enough to char to a crisp the leaves and the fallen branches together with the undergrowth. The fire formed a column surrounding his older self like a coiled snake ready to attack. Baring blue flamed fangs the creature of fire pounced at him, as he could but scream back.

"Scutum!" A shield of burning wood and pressured ground formed, barely enough to slow down the snake enough for him to run. The head of the fire animal crushed against the ground, its entire body glistening as it hissed foul curses to the skies. The snake had a fiery temper.

He chuckled.

He was going to die and all he thought about were bad puns based on fire. He clearly had lost his last remaining shreds of sanity at the sight of this.

"Trudo!" He roared back at the fire snake, already charging at him again. The lances erupted and struck, but the spell did not simply stop because of that. The small flickers of flames rejoined as if passing through the lances meant nothing. They reformed their snake-like self and ran at him, their teeth ready to tear him apart.

And then the snake was gone.

He widened his eyes as he heard a gurgled gasp. He turned his gaze wide to where his future-self had once been. A sword was sticking out of the man's chest, covered in his blood. Excalibur shone brightly as it sliced through the sides of his Future-self.

The man fell, and behind him another Harry stood, holding the sword with both arms and panting harshly. Sweat was falling copiously from his forehead; his body was trembling as it choked out words it didn't know it could hold.

"I...I'm..." He laughed as silver grains began to appear around his skin, slowly but surely removing him from existence. "She knew. She

had to know." A last choked bitter laugh escaped his lips. That was all he heard, as he watched himself, another future-self, disappear into nothingness.

The forest was now silent. The fires that had ravaged it but a moment before were now gone, as if nothing had ever touched these woods. He stood up and grasped at the Time-Turner. If he went back in time again, wielded Excalibur and killed his future-self...

No, that didn't make sense. Two Future-selves couldn't possibly exist at the same time could they? There was something wrong. Something extremely wrong was going on.

He took a deep breath, before turning to leave. He was a bit covered in soot and had light scratches on his face and arms, but he was fine apart from that. His back felt warm, but it was nothing he couldn't have checked by giving the fault to a mere accident with the fire-pit in the Ravenclaw common room. He just had to time it well.

He waited behind a couple of trees for the time to pass. If he now went to where his Future-Self was fighting his Past-Self and intervened, would he stop them?

What would happen then?

Why would he do that to begin with? Did he really want to die?

But his future-self had done something so horrible that suicide had become a choice. Something so horrendous and yet...yet he had killed his future-self himself, hadn't he?

How could one go and watch one's own murderer in his mirror?

He brought a hand to his mouth, holding it to avoid another wave of retching as the nausea hit him. What had he done? What? What? What?

Could he have one year, one year of peace? It had all started with the Time-Turner, hadn't it?

He grasped at the thing and looked at it. If he threw it away...

He wouldn't be able to be both Duke Wyllt and Harry Potter if he threw it away.

He had things he had to do. He had duties he had to uphold.

He wasn't doing this for himself.

He was doing this for Hermione, for Lillian, for Draco, for all those who would serve under his banner. He felt the cold wind of the forest blow through his hair a shivering breeze. The Time-Turner felt like a solid block of lead in his hand...

'Tick-Tack, Tick-Tack, spin me around and I'll bring you back.

Careful that whatever you do, change is not something I can do.'

Then what was this all about? If the Time-Turner couldn't change time, then what could?

"Man was not meant to meddle with time." He whispered to himself. "Man was not meant to fight the flow of fate."

"Man wasn't meant for prophecies either." A sharp voice snapped at him, "But that does not make them any less real."

He spun around, but no-one was there.

He groaned, and then began to walk towards the school once more. He was tired of hearing voices.

Lillian Potter

She had barely stepped inside the common room of Gryffindor that Ron stood up from his seat near the fire. He walked briskly towards the male dorms, and stomped his feet on the ground all the way upstairs. She looked at him go with a hurt look on her face, her eyes moving away from his retreating back and towards the sofa.

She sat down on it, her hands folded on her lap while staring at the flame.

She shook her head gently, letting her long red hair grasp a bit of air as she moved it. Her eyes always went to her scar next. Every time

she was about to start crying, she looked down at her left hand, at the scar on it, and she couldn't help but stop. It wouldn't do to cry.

She was the Girl-Who-Lived and the world loved her for it. Loved her for something she hadn't done and had no memory of doing. The world loved her, and now it loved her brother. Only her brother was actually worth the title, and she wasn't. The way he had talked to Ron, the way he had acted: those were the qualities of a hero she was not.

She had just stood there watching. Harry had taken the situation and had changed it to fit him. He had walked with determination. Hermione and Draco had answered in tandem to the situation, but he had solved the trouble...and only Ron ended up punished for it.

She slightly tensed as someone walked closer to her. She opened her eyes and was surprised to see the awry looking faces of Lavender Brown and Parvati Patil. Romilda Vane was a few steps behind the other two, and all three girls seemed to be contrite.

"We...We heard what happened in the greenhouses." Lavender was the one to talk.

"Oh?" She replied, news travelled fast, albeit considering Ron was already in the common room...

"Yes." Parvati nodded. "And we wanted to say...we're sorry."

She blinked, looking at the sheepishly flustered girls who seemed genuinely sorry for what they had done...whatever it was.

"For...for what?" She asked, a slight feeling of dread looming over her.

"For having..." Lavender Brown's right hand went up before curling slightly into a fist, her gaze moving sideways. "We...We didn't think much about..."

"What did you do?" She asked, ghastly pale.

"We..."

She was already climbing up the stairs of the dorm, when the girls found the courage to speak. She opened up the door and looked at the state her bed was in, before taking a moment to calm down. It didn't look that bad. There was nothing wrong with her bed, so maybe...the girls had messed with her clothes?

She took a few steps towards the trunk, opening it and looking with a mixture of relief and perplexity at the contents. Nothing seemed out of place.

She turned around to look with a puzzled expression at her roommates, who had followed her upstairs.

"I don't understand." She muttered. "What did you do?"

It was Romilda who came forward in the end, holding the Daily Prophet in her hands.

Lillian grabbed the newspaper and looked at the head title.

Girl-Who-Lived or Girl-Who-Sold herself out? By Rita Skeeter.

She paled as she read more and more of the tale spun by the journalist. It...It...she turned sharply red and then looked at her three roommates. She clenched tightly the newspaper, so much that she didn't even realize she had torn it in two.

"Why?" She choked out. The article didn't just show her in a bad light, it was worse. It showed Lillian Potter as a nearly complete whore who sold herself out for fame and money. It showed her as nothing more than a puppet carried on by Dumbledore, on whom the woman seemed to fire against too. The article was so shrewd it even hinted at her having an...an illicit relationship with her brother of all things!

"She was at the train station." Romilda spoke embarrassedly. "We didn't think...We weren't expecting her to write something like this..."

"What?" She laughed bitterly, "Like a...like a...like a whore?" She shrieked as she tore apart the Daily Prophet into bits and pieces.

"We're sorry!"

"You're sorry." Lillian chuckled with a voice devoid of even the slightest emotion. "No, you're not sorry enough."

And then she brought her wand forward.

And the girls screamed.

Harry Potter

The Room of Requirement looked like one of those used by the House of Commons, when debating something. Albeit there were stairs leading downwards, as if it was a sort of mock imitation of the Coliseum, and it held ghosts. A giant painting stood on all sides of the room, housing all the painted protagonists as one single block. Standing floating atop a single lump of grey rock, bound by chains, at the center of the room, was Peeves.

The Invisibility cloak he had used to hide himself was now silver, standing around his shoulders as a proud mantle fit for a King. Harry looked around amazed at the sight of the ghosts standing up and bowing to him as he walked. Peeves was excitedly clapping his hands while chanting 'Here comes the King'.

There was a light music filling the air, brought forth by the magic of the room. A few of the ghosts that once belonged in a choir actually sang along. Time seemed to stretch as he took step after step towards the center of the room.

"Zadok the Priest, and Nathan the Prophet anointed Solomon King."

"Sirs, I here present unto you our very own Harry Dursley!" Peeves intoned in a surprisingly somber tone, albeit the music did not interrupt itself as he walked. He felt himself under the scrutinizing gaze of the entire room, yet somehow he couldn't avoid standing tall with his shoulders squared.

"And all the people rejoic'd, and said,"

"Your undoubted King. Wherefore all you who are come this day to do your homage and service, are you willing to do the same?" Peeves continued, as his hand shot to the sides of the room, where a bright silver coronet appeared. Sitting at the center of it was a

large oval Sapphire, while etched upon its surface there were bright letters burning he couldn't see clearly, being still far from it.

"God save the King! Long live the King!"

A set of loud claps echoed throughout the room, coming from the painting where Sir Cadogan was leading the charge. The paintings of the entirety of Hogwarts were there reunited, clapping as loudly as they could.

"May the King live for ever!"

The Bloody Baron was the first to start politely clapping, just like all the other 'noble' ghosts began doing the same. The more down to earth ones clapped strongly, and it took Peeves a moment to shout a 'silence in the room!' to get the noise level down enough for the song to be once more hearable. Harry took more steps down, his eyes roving the crowd and watching the Grey Lady seemingly look at the silver coronet with a look of absolute hatred.

Next to her Newton Scamander was holding her shoulders, whispering in her ear. The Bloody Baron locked eyes with him, and made a single gesture of 'silence'. He turned his gaze back to the center of the room, to Peeves, and he began to descend again.

"Amen, Allelujah."

"Promise!" Peeves began with a wide smile, his arms widening, "and Sweare to Governe the People of this Kingdome of Hogwarts and the Dominions thereto belonging according to the Statutes in the Castle's charter Agreed on and the Laws and Customs of the same!"

Harry stopped once he had reached the end of the stairs.

Wit beyond measure is man's greatest treasure.

Those were the words written on the coronet that seemed more like a diadem than a crown. It shone brightly for a moment, as Peeves looked at him with an extremely serious face. It was completely off everything Harry knew of the Poltergeist, but he had played along until then, hadn't he?

Was this what his future-self had dreaded and wished to stop? Him being crowned?

"Do you swear?" Peeves asked, slow but loud enough for all to hear, his voice echoing through the chamber. "Do you swear to bring forth what once was? Do you swear to do that which your ancestors could not? Do you, Harry James Dursley, swear upon this assembly of ghosts and free men, to govern us with fair hand and rightful justice?"

He closed his eyes.

His charred body came into his memory. The look of pain, of anger, of hatred for himself and for whatever he would cause relied and hinged on this single moment.

He tightened his hold on his wand, slowly feeling it pulse as it morphed into Excalibur.

The blade burst to flame before he could even think about it. The tip of the blade pushed against the ground of the room that shuddered and whined like a beast being wounded. Flames melted the ground as he tightened his grip over the handle of the sword that could cut through steel.

Like Napoleon himself, he grasped the diadem from the hands of Peeves.

No archbishop or poltergeist would crown him: he would crown himself.

He felt something twinge and push as his fingers clasped around the diadem. He felt something whisper and mutter words of knowledge and power into his ears. He understood and frothed for more as his left hand brought the diadem down on his head.

Mere inches separated the diadem from the top of his head.

And then, the screams began.

Author's notes

Cliffhanger.

Good and nice set of twists for this chapter.

Well, who thought Argus Filch would be a spy for Voldemort?

Who saw the Diadem of Ravenclaw being used in this moment?

What a restless FIRST day for Harry. Man, if the school year begins like this I shudder and wonder at what awaits him further down the road.

Wait, I'm the author.

I should know...

The song that is sung is Zadok the Priest, used to crown the Kings of the United Kingdom.

This chapter is ultra-filled with sharp contrasts. We have Harry using his brain and knowledge, Lillian being 'forgiven' by the Gryffindors but not being willing to forgive, Harry (once more) getting his due, Future Harry actually helping Past-Harry, before trying to kill him and failing when another Future-Harry entered the frame.

You know what they say about Good Intentions?

They pave the way to hell.

Still working on the Guide to Book Two (Just how much stuff did I pour in that second book?)

Oh, and a digital cookie to Vikraal. He's too sharp for his own good.

PS:

The First chapter is currently undergoing the grinders of Beta-Work! The others will soon follow. I plan on adding/removing stuff to give a better 'flow' to the story as the work progresses. (You know, straightening it all, removing redundant words and the likes)

Harry Wyllt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter 6

He remembered the screams. Bleakly opening his eyes, he looked at the white ceiling of the infirmary. There was the sound of small footsteps going around him, hushed whispers and murmurs.

"You cannot see him yet, headmaster." Madam Pomfrey's voice echoed through the room. He could hear the light bubbling noise of a few potions standing by his bedside. No doubt he would have to drink them once he woke up. It felt strangely nostalgic, to have to spend the first day at Hogwarts in the infirmary. Well, at least it was better than having to spend the last one.

"You will warn me when he awakes?" The voice of the Headmaster reached his ears and he silently frowned. There was a tone of concern in the voice of the old man, one that he didn't like.

"I will when he'll be able to receive visits. The poor boy was practically drained of his magic, Dumbledore. It's like he fought off a powerful possession."

Possession? What was Madam Pomfrey speaking about?

And then it all came back to him. There wasn't just a specific recollection, it was as if all the events of his 'crowning' had come back one after the other. Perilously hanging by a mere thread of consciousness, his brain sorted through the images. There had been a sudden beginning of screams. More than screams, they sounded like wails. The noises had intensified to the point where he had believed his ears would burst, until suddenly the diadem had slipped from his fingers.

No, more than slipped from his fingers; The diadem had blown off together with his arm.

He widened his eyes in shock as he moved his hand. He felt it. He felt his arm still there. He could touch it if he wanted to. That meant he just had a bad dream, right? His arm hadn't been blasted off. It just wasn't possible for someone to blast off his arm like that with no consequence and...

"Bombarda!"

"You dare use Fiendfyre!"

Those words hit him. It was possible, of course, but who had delivered the shot? The blood loss had probably sent him into shock immediately, and the only things he remembered were the frantic screams of the portraits running away and the ghosts dispersing, as the stone in the room of requirements cracked under the heat of the strange sentient flames of hell. He had then felt a pushing force sending him out, held in the arms of someone he couldn't remember.

"Thank Merlin you're awake." The nurse began, walking closer to his side. He could see the witch holding a concerned expression on her face, mixed with a frown that clearly showed her displeasure in having him in the infirmary. "If I didn't know better, I'd say you enjoy being in the infirmary."

"I love the beds." He replied calmly. "They're comfortable." He added, trying for humor and miserably failing, if the light annoyance shown on the woman's lips were of any indication.

"Yes, well, I don't particularly enjoy having to keep out a crowd."

"A crowd?" He asked.

"Miss Granger appears to hold the belief that I want to murder you." The nurse added with a scoff, "And I had to keep out your mother because she seemed to believe my expertise meant nothing." The old woman shrugged, "Not that she bothered much with your sister's night victims that earned you three colleagues in the ward."

"What?" He brought up an eyebrow in surprise. "What did she do?"

"Oh, nothing much: the usual jinxes and stinging hexes students send around. She was particularly vicious however, and was suspended from Hogwarts for a week. Coincidentally, I gave your mother a week off just at the same moment." She looked at him with a slightly worried gaze, "Would you like visitors now?"

"Shouldn't you tell me if I can have them to begin with?" He asked back perplexed.

"You're practically as fit as I can see. Just don't strain yourself with casting spells." The old nurse moved her hands deftly to where the potions stood on his bed-side. "And you should at least allow Miss Granger inside. She hasn't stopped pacing in front of the door since the lessons have ended: it's Thursday afternoon by the way, Mister Potter."

He winced at that. He had skipped an entire day, and somehow he believed that Hermione had done pretty much the same. He sincerely hoped Draco hadn't dosed Hermione with Amortentia, because while he could understand loyalty, this seemed a bit off.

"Ehm...Madam Pomfrey?" He began hesitantly, "There's something I have to ask." He frowned. Should he pursue the argument? It wasn't his life to begin with, but Hermione's. Who was he to decide for her?

"Ask away then." The nurse replied calmly. "I have to admit I was waiting for you to come around and ask: you are after all an extremely sensible boy."

He sort of cracked a small smile at the compliment.

"Hermione...It's kind of troublesome to say," he whispered, "She kissed me, and...I mean I know what that is!" He hastily added, "It's just that...I think that's not really...She's afraid and I don't think it feels right to do anything...not without having..."

"I understand Mister Potter," Madam Pomfrey smiled, "Your father took more than half an hour to say what he really wanted to say too when he was young."

He widened his eyes. Did one of his father's friend need a psychiatrist too? Maybe his father had a mad friend; well Pettigrew had turned out a spy hadn't he? Pettigrew! The rat was still in the castle!

His eyes would have literally popped out of their sockets had they been able to. He had forgotten there was a murderer out in the castle! He had forgotten about his father's warning! Damn it! He didn't have time to waste in the infirmary! He had to ask Hermione, find the rat and get to the bottom of it.

"I think I'll leave now." He muttered quickly, getting to his feet as he sighed in relief. He was in his robes and not in a silly infirmary-suit. "Really, I'm fine and..."

"Oh, of course." The nurse nodded, "However take this," she said scribbling a note on a small slip of parchment. "You are a third year, and there are Hogsmeade's weekends now. I know Minerva might be a prude, but students will be students."

"Ehm, really, I have to..."

"Nonsense! Things have to be done right, young man!" Pomfrey snapped at him, giving the slip in his hand. "This is the address to someplace that might help you and Miss Granger out. Just remember to keep an open mind."

Well, it was the address of a psychiatrist, he supposed being open-minded was a part of it.

He was shoed out quite immediately, barely catching a glimpse of the face of one of the victims of his sister. Whoever the girl was, she was a first year, currently sleeping with her face covered in gauzes and with empty potion bottles on her bed desk.

He left the infirmary expecting Hermione to pounce on him like a jaguar or some sort of feral animal. He expected some sort of screaming contest that would lead to Madam Pomfrey to ask them to leave the premises. He just hadn't expected the girl to simply look at him with hurt so clearly visible on her face and then stiffly turn and walk away.

"Hermione?" He croaked, looking at the retreating back of the girl. The brown-haired girl stilled for a moment, and then she began to run away, leaving him with his right hand up that he had brought up by reflex in a sort-of attempt at asking her to stay still.

He clenched his offered hand in a tight fist, and then lowered it to his side. He didn't understand girls, and with Lillian being suspended and his mother not in the castle, he had even less hopes of understanding them. It was as he took the decision to step in the same direction as Hermione that he halted midway. He heard a soft breathing rhythm close to him.

Somebody was following him pretty closely.

He absent-mindedly went for the latch of his cloak, only to find the invisibility one missing. Strangely, that did pacify him. He walked briskly through the corridor, until he reached a point where no paintings were visible, gingerly touching his sleeve in search of his wand, but not finding it there. He had asked his wand to take on the form of Excalibur, hadn't he?

He heard the tell-tale sound of something swishing out from beneath robes, and he smiled to himself.

"Silently obliterating the nurse, really?" He asked, a small smile spreading on his lips as he turned. There was nothing in the corridor, except Excalibur gingerly placed near a wall. He walked to grasp it and swiftly the sword transformed back into his wand. "The cloak now, Professor." He commented scathingly. He heard the rustling noise of a door being opened to the side of the corridor, and as he briskly walked in he heard it close behind him.

"How?" The voice was female as it asked the question.

"A straight face." He replied with a chuckle "And I overheard the nurse talking to Dumbledore. Yet she dismissed me without a fuss, as if the man hadn't told her anything and she didn't know better of my condition. I heard no sounds of 'Obliviate' but I am familiar with it...which led me to believe it had to be a professor." His face displayed a frown.

"I had expected professor Snape, however." He admitted quietly. "The room of requirement was after all charmed by the Headmaster."

"And you went anyway?" The female asked, with an undertone of anger. "What if Dumbledore had grasped your sword, or your cloak?"

He chuckled again.

"I entered through the Chamber of Secrets. So, Professor Graham, why the interest in me?" His face dropped the smile, as he narrowed his eyes towards the woman who, at being called, dropped the cowl from the cloak.

Professor Graham was looking at him with a positively puzzled face. She hadn't probably expected for him to pinpoint who she was in the immediate. She also hadn't probably expected for him to know where she was in the room with the invisibility cloak on.

A pity, because he wasn't going to share his secret.

"How did you..." She began, but he cut her off.

"First the cloak, then we can talk all you want."

Her face displayed her sourness in separating from the cloak of invisibility, but she did so nevertheless. He nodded as he accepted the cloak back, and like a living creature the Hallow stirred and clasped itself once more around his neck. It remained visible as a shimmering pool of silver however, floating gently a few inches away from the ground.

"How did you know it was me?" She asked, her voice betraying worry.

"You're the new professor." He pointed out, "And I like history. No offense to Binns, but your voice is far better than his monotone."

The woman's eyes widened for a moment in surprise, before she crossed her arms over her chest and looked to the side, huffing in clear displeasure.

"It's a bit thin to mount a case." She pointed out.

"Why don't you start by telling me what you did in the room?" He replied calmly. "You know, you can start by the thing that tore apart my arm."

She winced. "I put it back together and Madam Pomfrey did the rest."

"You tore apart my arm. I'm waiting an answer." He said, his eyes narrowing. "You know; something that stops me from harming you somehow."

"Not like you can." She chuckled back not afraid at all of his threat. "You wouldn't harm a professor with Dumbledore breathing down your neck, and I'm your..."

"Trudo." She dodged the spell deftly, her gaze bewildered by what he had just done. "I can if I must. I will always have an alibi ready, Professor. If I need to soil my hands with murder, then I will: because that seems the only thing to elicit any truth out of people."

"So I wasn't fast enough." She whispered. Her gaze suddenly glazed over as if she was remembering something important. "I wasn't good enough. Again, I failed." She chuckled without an ounce of mirth. "I'm just a failure all the way through."

He brought an eyebrow up, now what was the pathological...

Oh. The diadem.

It felt strange, but he suddenly calmed down and clamped his thoughts to a frozen stop. He was extremely familiar with possessions now, with being dominated or placed under control. He held little doubt he could practically fend off an Imperius without even trying to, and this? Whatever this was...he had already felt it once. He knew how to fight it off.

He gritted his teeth as he meticulously began to wall off his brain piece by piece in his mind. There it was. He could feel it stirring and walking around, trying to corrupt and touch. It was knowledge of dark things, important things. It was the thing that the diadem held within and that now had gone to him when it had been shattered.

"I see." He hissed slightly, before finally grasping at the strands of dark thoughts and carefully wrapping them into mental silk net. Then, with the tip of his wand, he brought it out with a sharp tug. A vicious dark-colored line emerged like a sort of parasitic leech. He looked at it with disgust, before throwing the thing away from him. It screamed as it tried to once more move towards him, but the woman was faster.

Her look, one that seemed now positively filled with mirth and happiness and joy, was completely transfixed on the leech that she had burned to the ground. She actually laughed as she heard the thing shriek and scream while it melted off.

Then she turned to look at him, and for a second he suspected she'd be burning him next. Instead she didn't. She closed the distance and grasped him by the shoulders, tears brimming down her eyes as she smiled at him, before hugging him tightly.

"It's over." Her breath hitched. "It's finally over." She seemed positively happy about it. "So now I can..." She stilled. Her eyes went to her hands, and her arms. She was apparently shocked because of something.

"Why am I still here?" She whispered. "No. It's not right. I shouldn't...He shouldn't..."

"You're not going to tell me anything, are you?" He suddenly brought an eyebrow up, looking at the woman who was for all purposes completely bonkers.

"It was me then." She murmured; her voice hitching. "I see..."

In retrospect, Harry should have acted smarter when the tip of Professor Graham's wand aimed at his head. As he was...

He blinked his eyes open. He was out of the infirmary, Hermione had just dashed away and he was holding on to his invisibility cloak and wand.

Everything was fine in the world.

He did have the nagging sensation of having forgotten something...His hand reached for his pockets, where the slip of an address at Hogsmeade was for a psychiatrist, or was it mind healer? He'd check it out on the first weekend. At the moment he just had to go back to the Ravenclaw common room.

Professor Graham

"Obliviate!"

She had done stupid things in the past. She admitted them freely. She had believed in things that weren't there and said things she hadn't truly meant, yet in the end it all came down to that precise moment. She couldn't use a Time-Turner. She was barred from it,

and she knew it. Yet that didn't stop her from actually wishing for another chance.

It was ironic, really. Considering this was her second chance.

She shuddered at the murderous gazes the portraits sent her way. She hadn't banished Peeves for much, and she knew it. The Poltergeist had done the mistake of bringing the cornerstone in the room, he needed that for the ritual too...a ritual that she had never seen in the past.

It was a ritual that had taken Harry away. It made sense now. She didn't know how much history had changed by then, or if Peeves had actually done said thing the first time around in the same timeframe. Her memories were foggy at best.

She had stopped him however. The marauder's map in her hand had come from the future with her, stolen from what little resistance Grindelwald had offered. Space and time were bad to meddle with, but this was her chance. Her last chance would count for something. Peeves would need time to repair the cracks she had caused with the later use of Fiendfyre; he would need time...and that time she would use.

Time, that many believed the slave of Time-Turners, was instead their master. Time-Turners could not change time, but they could alter the consequences of the events as long as the perception remained unaltered. This was the crux of the matter.

The truth was that with Time-Turners, one could really save lives or change things, but only in the span of six hours, and only without changing the perspective of events. To say, if suddenly someone were to die of a heart stroke, and in the next six hours be mourned at the morgue, there was a way to save him.

One just had to slip the man a draught of the living dead, feign his death and give the fault to a heart stroke, and then make sure to wake him up after the six hours had passed.

As long as the past-self kept the same perspective, time would be appeased and lives could be saved.

There was, however, a different way.

It was the way that Harry had used, the way that she had discovered.

It was also the way that had brought Harry to power the first time. Time could be changed, but the consequences...

Something always was given back. There was a balance to keep up.

She shuddered as her hazel eyes settled on the Clock Tower. Standing atop a hill, accessible from the third floor...but what it truly hid stood not atop its summit, but deep beneath its roots. It was agonizing to see the clock's arms move and be unable to do something, anything, to make them go faster. If she had changed time for the better, then she truly and desperately wanted to know it.

Yet she was still there. If time changed, she should have disappeared. The fact that she didn't...

It didn't bode well.

Then again, when did anything she tried to do turn out right? She scoffed at her pessimistic thoughts, shaking her head as her steps took her away from the source of all her troubles. The shudders didn't stop however.

She realized the shudders were withheld sobs and tears wishing to come out only as she crumbled against the wall of the second floor's bathroom. Moaning Myrtle was doing her fair load of grieving, and as she joined her she couldn't help but bite her hand to choke down her wails.

The future had to have changed already.

So why, why was she still there!?

Harry Potter

"Hermione." He whispered. He didn't actually trust his voice to come out, as he looked at the sad state the brown-haired girl was in. She was sitting with her arms surrounding her legs and pushed up to her chest, looking with agonizing eyes at the fire pit in the Ravenclaw common room. There was no-one around, being it the dinner hour.

"I'm a failure, right?" She whispered harshly. "I can't get anything right."

"That's not true." He replied, getting down on one knee next to her. "You do a lot of right things."

"Like what?" She asked back, her eyes not leaving the crackling flames. "How did I help? When...When I heard you were in the infirmary..."

"It wasn't your fault." He said. His face turned into a slight questioning frown. "I didn't tell anyone."

"I know." She emptily chuckled. "You didn't trust anyone with it."

He tugged in a sharp breath, looking with wide eyes at the girl who had begun to cry silently.

"I'm a failure." She continued. "I...I'm just good at parroting words from books." Her breath hitched. "I remember during the first year, all the times I came down on Ron telling him how stupid he was and how he should just do his homework." She shook her head with her eyes closing for a moment, "As if homework can keep away Dementors, or fight against rituals, or destroy ancient wizards!" She then pressed her face against her knees.

"Hey," he whispered, scooting a bit closer, his left hand gently grasping her by the shoulder. "It's all right."

"No, it isn't." She answered back. "It will never be right again."

"Moping won't help you." He pressed on.

"At least it's something I'm good at." She retorted with a muffled voice.

"Now that's not true. You're smart. You have a great memory. You know a lot of spells I don't know." He pointed out, "I don't know about Expelliarmus or Incarcerous, but you know them both, right?"

"I..." Her hazel eyes glistened with tears as she slowly brought her head up to look at him. "I'm afraid."

"I know." He murmured, "I know." He added, "It feels as if you have no choice, as if you are nothing but the chew toy of fate. People enjoy tearing apart your life and you suffer through it all, with no light or hope for an exit. I understand it, I passed through it, and I'm here now."

He bit his lip.

"You know, there's something that helped me through it." He whispered the last part, and then on impulse, he tightly hugged the girl's frame. There was silence from the hitches and the sobs for a long, stretched minute. He could feel the girl slowly stop being tense, her body relaxing against his as he brought his right hand to gently caress her hair.

"I'm here. No matter what...I'll be here." He croaked out. He was sort of parroting Lillian's words, but if the words were right, did it matter who was the first to say them?

He could hear her start to breathe more evenly, her arms slowly encircling his chest as she began to return the hug. They remained there in silence, not ushering a single word. The only noise was that of the fire crackling until, clenching his robes, Hermione muttered.

"There are lessons tomorrow. We have potions, charms and ancient runes, then there's defense against the dark arts...we have a really big schedule and..." He squeezed her into his hug one last time, and then slowly let her go.

"And I'll see you tomorrow, then." He smiled and nodded as the girl turned so red she could rival with a tomato. He hadn't believed it possible, but apparently it was a trick of the fire pit's light. She scrambled on her feet in a hurry and dashed upstairs, leaving him to smile and then shake his head slowly.

It wasn't difficult acting good. It wasn't difficult caring for someone else. The problem was trying to understand if he was just fooling around or not...and if he was, did he have the heart to tell the girl? He knew what Hermione was passing through. The moment your ground is taken away from beneath you, the moment you discover you are truly alone, with no-one to turn to...that's the moment you realize you'd do anything to have something to grasp at.

He had done the same with Gellert.

The man had been no saint. He had been no hero. He had been the bringer of World War Two, and yet Harry had enjoyed learning under his wing. Even monsters were humans in the end. He absent-mindedly scratched the scars on his left hand, the one that formed a circle around a triangle and a line. The ring of Wyllt felt cool to the touch, his fingers tracing the signet of Merlin.

He should go to sleep. As Hermione had told him, the next day was a heavy one.

Merlin...

Only two days within the school, and already he missed Durmstrang.

Cŵn Annwn

The huntsmen were black, huge, and hideous, and rode on black horses and on black he-goats, and their hounds were jet black, with eyes like saucers, and horrible.

The sound of bells echoed through the city of Peterborough, as in the deep of the night loud sounds of horns reached every nook and cranny of the town. Swords and lances shone reflecting the light of the moon, and with bellowing roars and mighty growls the dogs of the Wild Hunt strode forward.

The huntsmen looked ahead, their faces covered but their arms and bodies no longer charred by the pain they had felt for centuries. They had been freed.

In the deep of the night, those who heard the horns felt their souls shift and tear away from their bodies. The bony hands of the leader of the hunt turned pale as white flesh surrounded them. The screaming of the souls around him was nothing less than delicious music in his ears and in that of his men.

"Until Eostre, men, we ride!" He blew in the horn with strength, and to that sound his men answered his call.

"Revenge upon the betrayer!" The men roared. "Revenge for King Herla!"

"Let no Saxon survive!" He roared back. "Let none of the invaders live to tell the tale! We march men! We march! Forward!"

And then the Hunt began.

Harry Potter

Last night had clarified a lot of things. As Machiavelli flew down from the air with the morning post, he smiled at his sister's and mother's letter, but placed them aside for the Daily Prophet. His good mood at the sight of his sausages portions and pancakes suddenly dropped down to the gutter with the article on the front page.

Magical Hazard in Hogwarts, by Rita Skeeter.

Two days ago I received incredible information about the state of health of precious Hogwarts students Romilda Vane, Parvati Patil and Lavender Brown. The three poor girls have been repeatedly assaulted by Miss Potter, The Girl Who Cursed, because they had dared to badmouth her. Clearly the sister of our nation's hero Harry Potter, The Boy Who Defeated Salazar, is having trouble being brought out of the spotlight.

What's more, it's been on the mouth of everyone that young Harry Potter already has a girlfriend, as a secret informant has personally told me.

SI: "He is seen always hanging around that muggle-born girl, the Granger. She's got the smarts for a love potion I reckon."

I was of course curious about why such secret informant had to be so negative in regards of Miss Granger, so he answered!

"Well, what do you expect from her? First year she tried to follow him around like a kicked puppy, I saw them in the library and she went away crying when he refused her! Then next year she suddenly kept on asking questions on who he was friends with and what he did, and finally this year she just got pardoned because Harry's kind? Nah, I reckon she had to..."

Of course there are words not repeated on this wonderful newspaper! So it seems that unrequited love became suddenly requited. And the secret informant has no doubt on the how!

Where does this lead us? Well, Miss Potter is clearly under the subject of jealousy also because of her womanly feelings! When Lavender Brown, Parvati Patil and Romilda Vane attempted to face Miss Potter on her and her brother's situation, the flames of jealousy sparked again, and not wishing her brother shared with anyone, she hexed them all in the infirmary!

The Secret Informant has however another bit of juicy gossip to share.

"Hermione Granger moved to Ravenclaw at the start of the year, and I saw them hug each other recently. It is clear that..."

The informant was a Ravenclaw.

He narrowed his eyes as he looked around the table. Hermione was looking at him with surprise, probably not understanding why he was holding the Daily Prophet like he was about to rend it. Her own copy flew down, soon joined by what looked like a bag of letters.

A big and menacing bag of Howlers.

"Tace!" The roar came from half of the Ravenclaw table at the same moment, resulting in a sizzling and a cracking from the various cursed letters that suddenly exploded. Harry pushed Hermione backwards, guarding her face with his chest as he could feel something slimy land on his back.

"MUDBL..."

"WHOR..."

"FILTH..."

And amidst the chaos that erupted in the dining hall, Harry held the trembling form of Hermione while his eyes narrowed down on the Headmaster.

And the Headmaster's cold gaze settled back on him.

It didn't take a genius to understand the subtle threat that had gone on. He hadn't met with the man the night before. Thus the wards had just so casually left the dangerous post through without checking on it. It was a warning. One that was making the back of his neck burn, but that didn't kill him.

It was probably going to be his last too, unless he did something he absolutely abhorred.

He had to talk with Dumbledore.

Now, how bad was that going to be?

Author's notes and historical explanations

The area east of Peterborough is known as 'The Fens'.

Salazar Slytherin came 'from a fen'.

Salazar was of Angli origin, while Rowena was Anglo-Saxon, and married the Briton King to then conquer the Kingdom of Kent. Surely you see the line of past by now.

Salazar and Rowena met before they met with Godric and Helga. Godric was Briton and Helga was from Wales (Briton again)

King Herla is heralded as the king of the wild hunt, having been betrayed by the 'dwarves' (oh, hey, not the Goblins eh! The Dwarves! No similarities! It's a mistake! Don't think about it!) since they convinced him to spend a few days to a marriage, while instead it took him two-hundred years to leave. The Briton thus conquered his lands in the meantime. (MY, How curious that is!) furthermore, there is a nice and cute specification that King Herla's wife instead did not go with him, but was seen in 'myth' speaking to the dwarves.

...Curious.

(This is all a mind-work based on real facts, nothing is true in canon and I probably twisted something to make it fit, but ehi...it fits.)

Two-hundred years later, King Herla is freed with his men, but guess what? Merlin's around so fear not!

And the rest is History.

PS:

Did I just make Hermione Granger the chew-toy of fate?

Probably.

I wonder her breaking point what could be. I mean, in canon she's shown to be emotive, but at the same time stress doesn't seem to affect her much. She doesn't 'bother' with much, and remains even when Ron leaves...I think she's nearing it however. Public bias and all, horrible situation, only one person to rely on...yes.

Oh and who is seeing the similarities between Hermione and Bellatrix? No really, I think Rowlings placed Bellatrix next to Voldemort to show how the 'hero' gone dark could have gone with his side-kicks. Ron betrays and so does Snape. Bellatrix is loyal and so is Hermione.

I just discovered that book 2 is the 'mother of all that is holy' in foreshadowing. I'm passing by the five-thousand words in summary alone.

PPS:

The thing that puzzles Professor Graham is that she believed the solution to be 'removing' whatever disgusting thing the diadem held and destroy it. The problem is that it wasn't that. Harry has already had his fair share of possessions, and is now completely immune.

Obliviate however is a spell that acts like a sort of bomb in one's own memory, shattering the recollections and needing time to repair them. Professor Graham didn't want Harry to know that she somehow knew more than she let on, and now Harry doesn't remember having a chat with the woman.

The Wild Hunt is said to start from Peterborough.

And the more time passes, the more I'm sure the Dementors came from the Wild hunt. The first line is the actual description of the Hunt taken from Wikipedia.

Harry Wyllt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter 7

He didn't want to skip Potions. The itching however was starting to make him change idea. The sensation of burning and the need to scratch his already sore neck was absolutely maddening. He gritted his teeth and clenched his fists. He had already applied cold water, and except for a nasty rash and slight flares of pain when the robe's fabric touched the affected area, he could do nothing else.

"I'm sorry." Hermione whispered. Her head low, the girl looked at the stone floor.

"I told you to stop it." He said, gazing at the downcast girl who was walking next to him. "It wasn't your fault."

"You protected me. It's always my fault." She replied.

He groaned as he would have rather preferred to bang his head against the wall than have this argument again. "You couldn't know."

"It's still my fault." She insisted. "You should just leave me alone." She added, closing her eyes to fight back the tears.

"Or maybe you should stop commiserating yourself." Draco's voice snapped from behind them, as they stopped for the seconds it took the pale blond boy to reach them and start walking next to them. "It doesn't make the King look good, if he's got a weeping brat next to him."

Hermione hitched a sob, as he looked slightly murderously towards the Slytherin. He had barely managed to make her stop crying a few minutes before, why did he have to say that!?

"Look," Draco hastily said, his eyes moving to the sides where a few students were talking to one another. "You want to help Harry, right?"

Hermione nodded between sobs at those words, and the Malfoy heir smiled as if in victory.

"Then you have to act tough, like you did with the Weasley prick: nothing has to faze you."

"But—"

"No." Draco shook his head. "Look, you are not helping the King's men by simply crying and wallowing in self-pity. If you want to help us, find a way to organize us better. Now we are all working on a person-by-person talk-to. If we could contact each other without having to waste this much time, we could be more effective."

"Like Voldemort's mark?" He found himself asking to Draco, "The Morsmordre?"

"Yes," Draco's breathing stilled, "something like that." He half-closed his eyes. "How do you know about it?"

He shrugged. "History of the Dark Lords in Great Britain."

Draco nodded, "Should have known." He smiled. "Taking notes on it?"

Harry raised an eyebrow, before grinning slightly back. "Of course."

"I'll do it." Hermione whispered with conviction, her eyes now glaring at a few snickering second years who eeped and recoiled. "I'll find a way. There is the Protean charm, maybe I can mix it with runes and see if I can get a magical equivalent for flesh branding..." She began to murmur furiously. "Yes." She nodded to herself. "I can do this."

She looked at Draco with a small smile, before adding. "Thank you, Draco."

The boy shrugged. "We're all in the same boat."

The dungeons were as cold and damp as Harry remembered them, albeit the torches seemed to be casting a light green color rather than their normal red. He tensed slightly as he sat down on the first row, Hermione at his side and Draco standing with Crabbe next to them. The other big boy looked sad, his face as downcast as that of Hermione if possible. He was insistently straightening his tie, setting his sleeves straight and trying to set his hair right.

He didn't ask, but the slight nervous feeling in his stomach intensified as the room filled. Finally the professor entered last, his robes billowing as he made his way deftly towards the front rows. Professor Snape turned his gaze towards the class, and curling his lips in distaste commented.

"Well, today we will begin by speaking about undetectable poisons." The man's voice was stern and gruff, as he began a long winded speech filled with particularities and details that forced everyone to write down even the commas. The moment the period was over, more than half of the students were pleading for mercy, while a few were crying over the pain they felt in their wrists.

"And once the color is ethereal, then and only then do you add the two grams of asphodel, not before! This concludes the lesson. I demand an essay of twenty-three feet on..."

"Bloody hell!" Ron Weasley exclaimed, "That's out of the..."

"Mister Weasley," Snape sneered looking at the red haired boy, "Perhaps twenty points from Gryffindor will suffice in making you rein in your tongue?"

"You greasy git!" Ron screamed back, "You can't do this!"

"I am a professor, I assure you Mister Weasley I can and will take points away from Gryffindor." The man's tone turned thoughtful, "Detention too I suppose. I will see you tonight at six: do not be late."

There was silence as Ron entered a stare off with the potions' master, albeit it lasted mere seconds it seemed to go for hours. In the end the red haired boy complied and lowered his head. Silently the students began to trickle out, leaving behind only the man, Harry and Hermione.

Draco and Crabbe gestured towards the door, mouthing an 'outside' to signal they would wait out there. Harry nodded back to the boy and then waited a few more seconds, before starting to walk towards the potion professor.

"Mister Potter?" Severus asked, turning a thoughtful gaze towards him. "What can I do for you?"

"Where do your loyalty lay, professor?" He asked carefully, his hand slowly grasping at his wand. "I have yet to understand it myself."

"Potter, it appears you have finally mustered your father's arrogance," the professor sneered back, "If you think you can intimidate me into..."

"No." Harry shook his head. "Not intimidate. I want the truth, professor." The boy commented. His green eyes locked in a battle with the man's dark ones. "Whose side are you on?"

The professor merely brought up an eyebrow, before replying. "And you expect someone to actually answer that question, Mister Potter? You are wasting my time."

"Do you work for Dumbledore?" He asked back, "Or for Nicholas Flamel?"

"I am loyal to Headmaster Dumbledore of course," the raven haired man replied curtly, "Is that all?"

"Are you loyal to the man or to the position, Snape?" Harry asked back, his eyes softening their gaze.

"Both. Now out of here! Don't you have any other lesson to go to!?"

He nodded, before chuckling bitterly. "I never asked you...but you knew that my parents were alive from the beginning, didn't you?"

Severus tensed, he could see that much. "So you..."

"I remember." He acknowledged, "I remember everything." He whispered, "Even that which I was not meant to know." He cryptically added. "Well professor, excuse us: we'll be taking our leave now."

They left the classroom in silence, yet he couldn't help but feel his back burn. This time however not because of the pus, but because of the piercing gaze the dark haired professor was giving him. They emerged from the class just in time to see Draco talking with Crabbe.

"...It wasn't like there was much of a choice..." The blond haired boy turned to look at them rapidly arriving, and smiled. "How did it go?" Draco asked.

"Well enough." He replied, shrugging slightly as he looked at the timetable. "Ancient Runes won't wait up forever."

"We have Charms instead." Draco replied, "See you later, King."

He nodded. Since both Charms and Ancient Runes were in the same timeframe, there simply was an extra hour during the day for the students who couldn't come to Charms because of the elective. The class of Ancient Runes was taught by Professor Bathsheda Babbling, a stocky looking woman in her late sixties with dark hair and a troll-like chin.

"Well then!" She curtly yelled as the class filled up. The classroom was called the Room of Runes, and was located near the North Tower. The west wall was covered in runes, all shining because of the reflected light from the glass panels that covered the east one. "Welcome back!" She screeched with her high-pitched tone. "Today we'll be having a general review! Before that however let me present the two new students! Miss Granger and Mister Potter!" Small murmurs echoed through the room until the woman screamed again. "Silence!"

He jolted up straightening his back with a shock. Hermione seemed slightly surprised at the tone, but was already preparing herself to take notes.

"As always, first the rune for lake!"

The woman whipped her wand out quickly, and a beam of light hit the corresponding rune on the wall.

"Laguz! It also means water. It can be inscribed near fields to keep the soil humid! Then we have Sowilo! Who knows what that means?"

"Sowilo...sun." Hermione whispered to herself, looking down on her notes. He sighed rolling his eyes, before giving a light pinch to the girl's side.

"Ouch!"

"Yes Miss Granger!?" Professor Babbling yelled.

"Sun, madam! It's the rune for sun!"

"Why the hell are you so chipper!? Stop exclaiming everything!" The Professor yelled back again. "You are however correct! Five points to Ravenclaw!"

"She's the one yelling since the beginning." Hermione whispered with a light pout. "You pinched me." She then hissed as an accusation.

"You knew the answer." He replied calmly. "You should have answered." He added.

Hermione didn't reply for the rest of the lesson, deeply lost in thoughts. It was as they left the class to reach Charms that she finally spoke again.

"I think I have something." She admitted. "We could use a Protean charm, but that would link objects. However we can inscribe runes and use those...if I can get runes and Protean charms to work together, and then find a way to add in curses for betrayers...Maybe a magical contract?" She frowned. "I'll have to look in the library later."

"Already with a solution?" Harry replied surprised. "See Hermione? You are smarter than me." He smiled, "Maybe you're the smartest witch in all of Hogwarts."

The girl remained silent, taking steps next to him as they reached for their Defense against the Dark Arts lesson. The classroom they entered had windows that gave on the lake, and as Professor Potter curtly began class, he realized the mood seemed to be damped. It didn't take much to understand why.

In Potions, no student of a house other of Slytherin had ever dared to do even the slightest of murmurs. During ancient runes, since it was an elective, the number of students was less than the full house year. Now however, Professor Potter was seemingly in a horrendous mood, and the class was unaware on how to proceed.

The actions of that morning were already all over the school probably, but that wasn't the problem. The problem was that he could clearly see the difficulty of the Gryffindors to look at the professor's eyes. Maybe they believed themselves culprits, or accomplices. Maybe they just didn't know whether the professor would be more of a stickler for rules or a defender of his daughter or interested in his own love life.

Truth be told, they probably were scared to be docked points or to elicit any reaction from him, rather than from his father. The fact there was a cabinet rumbling and locked with chains did little to assuage his nervousness on the matter.

"Boggarts." James began in a low voice. "They show your deepest fears." The man drawled out. "We already did them once. Now, we will do them again. Harry, come over here first, would you?" He nodded and stood up, taking small steps until he was in front of the drawer in question.

"Every man has something they fear." James commented calmly, "We might not even know what it is, but know that everyone fears something." The dark haired man flicked his wand towards the cabinet, and as soon as he did that the heavy metal lock came down.

"Fear can be defeated however. To defeat a boggart, the enchantment is Riddikulus. Boggarts feast on fear, laughter is lethal to them." And then the cabinet's shutters opened.

There was a vague fog of a deep black color. It oozed tendrils out slowly from within the cabinet, small whispered words echoed through the room as he tried to peer through it. It didn't seem scary. Then the voice spoke.

Harry.

No.

Harry...Harry?

No. No. NO. No.

Oh Harry...I missed you too.

NO. No. No...You're DEAD. YOU. ARE. DEAD.

It cannot die...what can forever lie...you know Lovecraft was a stickler for quotes. I missed you, didn't you miss me?

"You're not real." He whimpered.

I am. I am here Harry. Here forever now. Thank you Harry. Come on now, say it. Call me. Say my name. Let it be known what your greatest fear is. SCREAM IT HARRY. SCREAM MY NAME LIKE THE LITTLE CRYING BITCH YOU ARE.

NO.

Then I'll take them. I'll take them all. I'll start with Hermione, poor sycophant that the bitch is. Maybe you want to pop your cherry with her, huh? You pathetic excuse of a man! Look at you! Cowardice and arrogance hand in hand, holding the seeds of death and devastation! You cannot defeat me, Harry. I am your greatest fear made manifest! I AM YOU. I am that which you hide. That which you hate. I am that which you SHOULD BE.

Get out. OUT. You're not in my head. You're not real. This is the boggart.

But Boggarts are stupid Harry, didn't you know they can't do...

"Just die, King." He whispered. The burst of fire that erupted from his wand shot through the darkness, as an inhuman scream was heard from within the cabinet. "Die. And stay dead." He mouthed as the black fog dispersed while the tendrils recoiled as if struck. Then, finally, the cabinet exploded. The wooden shrapnel didn't wound anyone, however. Professor Potter was already there, wand in hand to shield everyone who might have been affected from the blast.

Then Harry turned around to stare at his father, and desperately holding down the gurgled screams that he wanted to make, he replied.

"Boggarts can burn too." And then he walked without saying another words towards his seat. The temperature in the room, even after such a display of fire, considerably dropped.

The professor coughed, before starting a general revision on boggarts. The mood did not lighten up after that, and as soon as the lesson was over the entire class stood up and dashed out.

"Harry, a moment please." His father said, gesturing for him to come closer.

He reluctantly did so, already preparing himself to be scolded for his actions. He didn't know what had taken him to burn down the cabinet and the boggart. Well actually he knew what it was: fear. It seemed so strange that his fear would turn out to be something so incorporeal and fleeting. Something so...so damning.

"Was that...one of Salazar's spells?" James suddenly asked, his eyes roving to the scorched cabinet.

"Yeah." He lied. The lie came off quickly, smoothly and immediately. He had thought to grasp at straws, and yet there he was having the excuse served out.

"Listen Harry," James began, "this weekend we're having a family reunion at The Three Broomsticks, in Hogsmeade. It's just going to be me, you, Lillian, Lily and Hermione of course." He added as he saw his look towards the brown haired girl who was still taking her sweet and long time in grasping her books.

Sycophant.

He flinched harshly at the thought. It was as if somebody had hit him on the sides, the dread coiling off in waves around him as he realized what truly he feared wasn't just the voice of King, but his very being. He didn't fear King because of Voldemort. He didn't fear King because of his power. He didn't fear King because of who he was. He feared him, he dreaded him, because he was what he could become. King was his future.

A future that died, killed by its past self's hands at the beginning of this year.

A future so mad in grief that it came back if only to kill himself.

A future that he would fight against with all he had.

"What time?"

"Half-way through the afternoon? Lillian will probably want to go with you and Hermione, unless you want some private time together?" James spoke slowly and in a murmur the last words, and Harry did feel some sort of heat rise to his face. He was embarrassed. He was positively flustered.

"I..." The psychiatric help. "Yes. Maybe later on, but...I had something planned."

James smiled. "That's my son. Already stealing hearts." The man winked. "I'll rein Lillian in then."

He nodded back, before turning to leave together with Hermione who —just so casually— finished setting all her things in her book bag just as he neared her. The two of them left once more in silence. His mind however was filled with thoughts.

Was that really his biggest fear? King? Was King what he truly feared? Did he somehow subconsciously block it? He had to admit to himself that it had been scary. He had truly thought for a moment that King had come back, but then again was it the voice that he feared, or the actions it could make him do? He wasn't in a happy mood at all as they made their way to the Charm's classroom.

Professor Flitwick was instead happy to see them, and as he explained the usage of the Glacius spell, Harry couldn't help but feel that this was one thing he'd never be able to do.

His wand refused. It was clear. He understood it as soon as he tried to cast the spell. He went through half of the motions and then stopped. He frowned as he could feel the waves of wrongness emanate from the wood. The Glacius spell conjured a gust of cold freezing wind, but his wand refused to work with cold, freezing or even anything remotely icy. It was made for fire. It would produce fire.

It was sort of taunting him, sort of telling him with subtle hints and emotions that ice was for sissies, or that cold wasn't meant to exist in the world. Maybe this was what Ollivander meant when 'a wand knows its master' or maybe it just was that some wands held their emotions more close to their bark than others. The wand refused,

and he knew he could press on and still get the result. He knew the wand would eventually comply...he just didn't want to force the wand to do so.

"Mister Potter?" Professor Flitwick suddenly asked him, walking near his work bench where his glass of water was still perfectly liquid. "Are you having troubles?"

There were few murmurs in the room following that question. He suddenly knew why the thing was eliciting such a reaction. He had destroyed Salazar; it wouldn't do to be unable to cast such a simple spell!

"No professor," he replied calmly, "but my wand's core not suited for this particular charm. She doesn't like cold."

"Uhm..." Filius' tone turned thoughtful. "What is your wand made of, Mister Potter?"

"Hazel." He replied calmly.

"Oh my!" The charm professor squeaked happily, "Hazel is an extremely peculiar branch of wood for a wand, Mister Potter! I must say...I'm no Ollivander of course, but might I suspect the core is of Dragon Heartstring?"

"Yes, sort of." He said, holding the handle of his wand that glinted for a split second.

"That would explain it. Hazel is known to be loyal to the owner, Mister Potter! Indeed the wand absorbs the energy of the wizard that uses it. Losing one's temper will make it dangerous for others to wield, since it will discharge at random moments. Furthermore the wand wilts when the owner dies...and if unicorn hair is within, then it is known to be the sole example of wand that may die together with their owner."

There was silence in the class, as the small man continued explaining. "If the wood has absorbed much of your energy and has been long with its core, then it is highly possible it is mimicking the core's likes and dislikes itself. In essence, a core as fiery as that of a dragon is truly ill-suited for this particular charm...I wonder

however..." The man's voice trailed off. "Would you remain after your lesson? There might be something I wish for you to try."

"Of course professor." He replied automatically. As the others kept on practicing the charm, with Hermione managing it on her thirteenth try, he began to ponder if he could do the opposite of Glacius with his wand. If Glacius created a cold wind that could freeze water, then what could warm it? Ignis would generate fire, but it wouldn't do to burn the desk. He needed something that would make warm wind appear.

Fire had the words Ignis, Mulciber and Flamma, while as verbs there were Accendo, Incaendo and Inflammo. Maybe he didn't need the word 'fire' but something related to 'warm'. Calesco and Calefacio came to his mind. He had to thank Gellert for having forced him to memorize the Latin dictionary...or at least some of it. There also was the adjective 'Caldus' now that he thought about it.

Glacius and Caldus seemed sort of the same thing...

He bit his lower lip, before pointing his wand at the goblet.

"Caldus." He whispered.

The water began to form bubbles. The bubbles began to rise. The goblet turned a slightly reddish color as the liquid within soon started boiling and evaporating.

He had done it. He had found the opposite charm of Glacius, and his wand had been more than happy to oblige him with that. He could feel his wand actually smile and sing as it warmed the water to the point of boiling. He smiled slightly too.

"Mister Potter, you never cease to surprise me." Professor Flitwick commented suddenly, having apparently finished his round of the students nearby and having returned to look at his work. "Five points to Ravenclaw for the discovery of the water boiling charm."

He had discovered warm water. Somehow the pun seemed missed on him, as it didn't make him feel any better. The class soon ended, and as he neared the professor he couldn't help but notice the quarter-goblin grabbing a thick book from within one of his desk's drawers.

Wandless magic, a guide to surprising your opponent.

"I have been a renowned duelist in my past," Filius began as he pushed the book into Harry's hands. "This book helped me a lot during the course of my career. There was not a duelist who couldn't cast something with his left hand as well as with his right one. It is an extremely important skill to have: it's also the reason why wizard duelists tend to be ambidextrous eventually."

"Wandless magic?" Harry muttered, before understanding why he had been given the book. If he didn't use the wand, then he could do magic that related to ice couldn't he? He just had to do the Glacius spell wandlessly. He looked at his left hand, opening and closing it with a thoughtful look.

"It is more difficult than what you may be thinking, Mister Potter." Filius replied calmly. "But it is an excellent project for one such as you. Wands can be recognized after all..." The subtle meaning didn't escape his ears, and he nodded back.

"All right. Thank you professor."

"My door is always open, Mister Potter. Should you need anything, do not hesitate to ask." Filius commented with a small smile. Harry nodded back and then left, Hermione already waiting for him outside. This was probably going to become the norm: Hermione didn't seem to be keen on going anywhere without being sure he was fine. She looked more like a mother hen than a friend, but then again maybe this was what female friends did?

"I have to speak with Dumbledore." He told her as they walked. "The sooner the better." He added.

She tensed, before nervously swallowing. "You don't have to—"

"I do." He cut her short. "And I will."

He turned the corner and was suddenly pummeled by a blond bullet that seemed to be fiercely hugging him for his dire life. He winced and gasped as the air was knocked out of his lungs. He looked down on the figure that was clutching him and was surprised to find a teary eyed Luna holding on to him as if her life depended on it.

"Luna?" He asked, perplexed.

"You died!" She wailed. "I thought...I thought you were dead!" She began to sob, "I didn't...I didn't know what to do." She whimpered.

"Now that's a sick joke." Hermione muttered darkly from his side. "Why would he die?" She asked, clearly disbelieving the blond girl.

Harry, however, was pale. "How do you know?" He whispered.

"You have to step away from him." She said. Her voice was a low murmur. "If you don't, he'll eat you."

"Who? Who's going to eat me?" He asked back perplexed, grabbing her by the shoulders. "Who is?"

King? Dumbledore? Voldemort? Gellert?

"Wyllt." She whispered back, "He...He's going to kill you." Her breath hitched, "And you will let him. You have to stop this Harry. Please. Give it back. Break it. Don't do it."

"Luna, I—"

"Get away from him, now." Hermione hissed, pulling the girl away from him and holding her painfully with her hands clawing at the younger Ravenclaw's shoulders. "Who made you do this, Luna? Huh? Was it Ron? Was it one of the Ravenclaws? You think you can just come here and—"

"Hermione, stop." He pulled her away from Luna, keeping both at arm's length one from the other. "She's not pranking me." He added calmly. "But how do you know this, Luna?"

"I...I was told." She whimpered. "Please stop using it. Please destroy it, please..."

"I..." He began, "I can't." He admitted, clenching his fists. "I need it...There's..."

"She told me that would be your answer." The girl whispered back, shaking her head as tears began to fall on her face. "She told me it

would end like this. I...I had to try, you know?" She murmured. "It's been nice —really nice— knowing you Harry, but I can't like Wyllt. I'm sorry...I can't." And then she turned and fled.

"Is she mad?" Hermione finally asked, breaking the silence that had descended in the hallway.

"No." He replied bitterly, "I think she...she was told the truth by future-me."

"Future-you?" Hermione brought up an eyebrow.

"Yes." He nodded. His gaze turned to Hermione. "If I turn dark or like Dumbledore, Hermione...can you promise me one thing?" The girl didn't reply, instead looking at him wide-eyed.

"Tell me." He added. "And...and if it doesn't work...kill me." And then he walked off, knowing all too well that this time, Hermione wouldn't be following him up the stairs to where Dumbledore's office was. He arrived at his destination in silence, not having crossed path with either students or ghosts, and even the portraits kept silent at his passage.

The stone gargoyle that separated him from his declared nemesis moved aside swiftly. It had been a heavy day already, and as he scratched gently the back of his neck, where the bubotuber's pus had hit his skin, he couldn't help but remind himself why he was there. He slowly walked up the flight of stairs, entering the office of Albus Dumbledore to find the man himself sitting at his desk.

On the shelf nearby the ties of Goyle and Clearwater were no longer there, just like their photos had been removed. The room didn't appear to have changed much, if not for the lack of Fawkes on his perch. His eyes moved for a moment around the paintings of the past headmasters, all looking down on him with curiosity.

"Harry, my boy." Albus began with a small smile, "How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine, headmaster." He replied calmly. Taking the offered chair in front of the old wizard, his eyes couldn't help themselves but fall on his 'crime' scene. The lemon drops were all there, apparently untouched.

"Lemon drop?" The man asked with a kind tone, gesturing to the yellow treat. He shook his head, rather placing his hands on his lap and closing them into fists.

"I don't have a sweet tongue." He said. Albus merely nodded, before displaying a grin and bringing both of his hands clasped together under his chin, using them to hold his head as he looked with his blue icy eyes straight at him. He looked back for a moment, and when their eyes met he suddenly felt it.

It was a massive force, both hypnotizing and dreadful, and he couldn't help but look back. His mind felt oppressively heavy, as if an enormous weight had just landed on it. He couldn't help but grit his teeth and clench his fists around his robes. He pushed back against the wave of nausea that seemed to be overwhelming him; the taste of bile already rising to his throat, with a strong mental push he sucked in air and exhaled slowly, the weight having lifted.

"Do you know how to dance, Mister Potter?" Albus suddenly asked, his eyes moving to the window.

He tensed slightly, before looking towards the closed glass panels himself. "No."

"You will receive your order of Merlin soon," he said, "You will need a partner for the ball that will follow the proclamation." The old man's twinkling gaze was now setting back towards his desk. "There are a few sixth and seventh years that are...amenable, to teach dancing."

"I see," he stiffened slightly as the headmaster slowly displayed a few papers with names and attached pictures.

"Mister Potter," the old man began, "You are of course free to bring Miss Granger."

He narrowed his eyes. "Am I so easy to read?"

Albus smiled. "I am an old man, Mister Potter: we have leeway in knowing things youth tends to ignore."

He remained quiet, trying to look as concentrated as possible on the parchments. The pictures all seemed to saucily wink at him, a few

going as far as pressing their arms together to display their chests. If he didn't know better, he was starting to think that Dumbledore was playing the matchmaker to him.

"Then you must know who Duke Wyllt is?" He asked back, "I dislike having a murderer every single year at Hogwarts on my back."

"It seems that whoever Duke Wyllt is, he has only recently entered the political arena. There is little to nothing, and the goblins are largely uncooperative on whom he might be." The voice was slightly amused, Dumbledore did in fact suspect him, but from here to...

"Dumbledore!" A transparent Lynx burst forth from the window of the castle, eerily reminding him of a ghost. "We have just received news from the French aurors! Open the floo connection because we have to speak urgently!"

Dumbledore appeared flabbergasted, but sourly acknowledged the lynx that dispersed in spoke. The old wizard turned to him and then resumed his light and unnerving smile.

"It appears we will have to cut our meeting short." The papers neatly collected themselves in a pile. "I have copies, so take your time, but please select the chosen dance instructor and meet with her before the end of the month."

Harry grabbed the papers and nodded, before turning his back on the man and starting to walk out. The last thing he heard as he began to descend the stairs was the fire roaring, and Albus calling 'Kingsley's office'.

The castle seemed eerie, as he walked through the quiet hallways. It was probably dinner time, and many were already downstairs eating. He didn't want to mingle however, not yet. His gaze fell to the nearby window, and once it went there he held his breath. Next to the greenhouses a group of students was talking to one another, and he knew that he shouldn't meddle...but it was dinner time, and maybe they needed to be told.

The fact he went down with the invisibility cloak clasped on, and walked silently meant nothing of course.

He reached the group just as they were already starting to move back within the castle, but he could make out who the students were. There was Neville, walking next to another Hufflepuff, Zacharias Smith if he wasn't wrong. There were Pansy, Padma, and Ron Weasley, who seemed to be in the midst of talking with Dean Thomas. He frowned as he realized just what the argument they were discussing seemed to be.

"We need to fix him. Bloody hell, we just get him when he's alone and make him understand."

"He took down Salazar, Ron." Dean replied calmly, "There is no way we can do something that direct."

"It's all a lie I tell you." Ron insisted. "I say, what about during the Hogsmeade weekend? Ohi Neville, you heard me!?"

"No." The Hufflepuff answered, "Not during Hogsmeade. We have to talk to him first. Ron, no offense but if we start hexing him without reason it just shows us as the bad guys." The boy replied, "Maybe it's all a misunderstanding."

"Lillian hexed my sister off! And she was apologizing to her!" Padma shrieked.

"And Potter is a monster." Pansy shuddered as she spoke. "Tell him, Zacharias."

"Yeah." The other Hufflepuff whimpered, "He can do things...I thought I was going to die."

"You did start the confrontation, and he did fight Salazar." Neville pointed out.

"That's a lie!" Ron insisted vehemently.

"Even if it is," Neville retorted, "he still survived him. Would you manage the same?" As Ron did not reply, Neville added, "Thought so."

"How about catching him by surprise in his dorm?" Pansy suggested. "Can't you just enter his room while he's sleeping and attack?"

"I could let you in the dorms." Padma muttered. "We could do this after Hogsmeade. He'd be tired from snogging the Granger girl and it would be all the more easy."

"And you could stay behind to keep Granger under threat if he tries something." Zacharias suddenly smiled. "You just need to get your roommates to keep quiet about it."

"Won't be difficult: there's no-one who tolerates her." Padma said.

Harry kept quiet, listening to their talks and plans as they entered the entrance of Hogwarts and made their way towards the dining Hall. He followed behind invisible, only to still as he discovered future-him sitting at the table, eating with Hermione next to him.

"The Forbidden Forest holds a lot of interesting creatures." Future-him began, "Some more loyal than others."

He blinked. He turned towards the entrance of the school and then back to Future-him. It...

It wasn't making any sense.

This was like a self-fulfilling action. There was no starting point. If Future-Him hadn't told him about the forbidden forest, then he wouldn't have gone. Yet again there was no way for present-him to know about it, and as such there just was no way for Future-Him to be seated there at the table.

This went against the laws of time and space continuum: he was sure of it.

Maybe Luna was right: maybe he should have destroyed the Time-Turner.

His eyes went through the hall, taking in the lack of Professor Graham and of Dumbledore, both apparently absent just like professor Snape. He clenched his cloak, before finally relenting and walking out. He'd head into the forbidden forest, then go back in time and warn his past self of 'loyal' creatures. He just wondered what he would find, but if his Future-self was there...

Just how did he get the information in the first place to begin with?

He frowned as his feet began to march on the grass. Wasn't he meant to go backwards in time to begin with? If Future-self was speaking of the Present-Time, then it didn't quite make sense for him to go then. He should go to Past-Time. In Past-Time he would then wait until Present-Time came around, and then go and eat and warn Past-Him of Past-Time things to do.

But it still did not answer the question of how Future-Him knew of this without breaking the continuum! He mentally groaned as he whipped out the Time-Turner. He didn't have much of a choice now, if he spun it back one hour...

Maybe he could wait a bit more. If he waited just one hour, then he'd be sent back at when he was eavesdropping on the group. Then he could go in the forest from there...or maybe...

He widened his eyes and understood.

He spun the Time-Turner back three hours, appearing just as he was heading over to Dumbledore. Invisible as he was he quietly made his way outside. He walked towards the Greenhouses, not at all surprised when Luna came out of there holding her book bag. So it made sense. The girl believed him dead because he had disappeared with the Time-Turner in hand in front of her.

The question was when and how.

"Hey Looney!" A Ravenclaw student snickered, his wand out as it pulled towards him with a spell the girl's book bag. Harry narrowed his eyes, and then looked as the bag was made to float upwards by the spell of the second year.

"Give it back please," Luna pleaded, but the students around merely laughed.

"Hey! Hold it still a moment." Another student snickered pointing his wand at the now in mid-air bag. "Flipendo!"

And then the bag took off. Flying straight in the Forbidden Forest.

Harry hated acknowledging that Future-Him was right.

He really, really hated that.

Gellert Grindelwald

The city of Hell was just as it had been described by Dante. He should have pointed out that Phlegyas was not actually like Charon, instead being the boat itself.

"You're sinking me." The boat groaned from its mast, where a humanoid face stood etched. "Living souls are so difficult to transport."

"Shut up." He hissed back, as they neared the gates of the city. He whipped his wand out the moment creatures that he could describe but as Fallen Angels came down from the walls.

He wasn't welcomed, but that didn't mean he could be stopped. The Elder Wand hummed and worked with unfettered power, striking with thunder, ice, fire and anything else that could work without even the slightest of difficulties. The wand seemed to strive in such an element as dire as hell itself, and yet he couldn't help but wonder if Dante had been a seer or if he had really visited this place once.

This clearly couldn't be hell itself, but rather a copy of it, placed as one more safeguard against those who'd try and climb the mountain for whatever stood at its peak. Even the things he called Fallen Angels were nothing more than Inferis of various corpses, assembled to look like the devils themselves. It all was a stage, just like the talking boat who lamented about the weight of the living...considering he was floating a few inches atop the boat just to be sure not to touch it, he knew it was all staged.

The question was why of course. One just didn't go to such lengths and efforts unless there was something he needed to be done. The travel wasn't even making him break a sweat. He had expected traps, wards, runic circles...but he hadn't expected a mere bunch of Inferi and nothing more.

It was as he walked through the torn doors of Dis, passing atop the rubble and the broken walls, that he began to doubt this to be the right way. What if it all had been but a giant misdirection? What if the correct road hadn't been through here but around it?

He stopped. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, before quietly removing the compulsion charms around him. He opened his eyes and looked from atop the gates downwards, to where the three circles of the city of Dis stood. Flames sprouted from every corner, and the stones themselves randomly burst releasing pressured steam that could probably scorch alive anything that passed upon them.

A swarm of Nundus was being held within the first circle of the city of Dis, and yet those creatures weren't actually the problem: at the bottom of the city was a trap door. A dingy looking wooden trap door without a handle. The handle in question seemed to have been used to perforate the nose of a seven headed and sleeping hydra that stood with its heads resting on the second circle, while guarding the trap-door itself three Basilisks were with their eyes closed in wait.

"This is the last time I think I'm having an easy time." He muttered to himself, slowly grasping one of the few remaining polyjuiced laced candies.

His polyjuiced persona had to be used sparingly from there onwards. He didn't have many remaining, and unless he somehow managed to gather the ingredients along the way...He had to make do with what he had. He just hoped it would be enough.

Well, if only he had some sort of help to...

He turned his gaze back, to where the talking boat was just then starting to float away.

He flicked his wand and levitated it, smiling as the boat began to gurgle in surprise. He moved his wand over his head, and the next moment it transformed into a set of three steel screws the size of train wagon. That would take care of the basilisks. Unless...

He stared with a thoughtful gaze at the Nundus, of whom the majority was prowling and eating one another, while a few seemed to feast on a supply of broken bodies and rotten parts of Inferi. He wondered who refilled the area, if nobody had been around for centuries. Surely the creatures would have died unless fed...

He smiled. It was sort of like imitating his pupil on one side.

On the other...

The entire sixth circle of Hell, or better yet called the first circle of the city of Dis, collapsed upon the second just as three steel screws plunged deep within the brains of the three sleeping basilisks. The Hydra awoke just in time to see the few surviving Nundus start to roar and pounce at her.

Gellert smiled, pushing the candy in his hand back into his pocket.

Brains over brawns: that was why the hat had sent him into Ravenclaw. Albeit he had been undecided between Ravenclaw and Slytherin, but in the end, knowledge had won over.

Knowledge...and wits, for they were a man's best treasure.

Tom Riddle

"Enjoying the sun, Bellatrix dear?" The woman was determined. He'd give her that. Not many managed to keep up the will to try and break his petrification spells repeatedly. Even the Imperius was starting to wane in potency, but it wasn't as if he could let such a charming woman go back to Britain so soon. It would ruin everything. Everything had been carefully planned and would be carefully executed. There just wasn't a reason for him to interfere.

Soon, soon one of his other selves would overstretch. It was going to be soon. He knew it. He could feel it 'in the force' so to speak. Then, when that was bound to happen he'd wait. The sun was nice and the sky clear, his Horcruxes killed one another and believed him dead...

He was Lord Voldemort, but that didn't mean he had to be an imbecile. Prophecies, of those he knew a lot. Oh how many had he read looking for bits and pieces that could lead him to the secrets of immortality. He had glimpsed and understood their powers, their strengths and their weaknesses. They chained and shackled faith to obey their words, but at the same time they twisted and bended to the point where as long as it was completed, the rest didn't matter.

The one born to vanquish the dark lord approaches.

But did that sentence refer to him? Ah! That was the great thing of prophecies. They never named someone. He had pushed in the right direction, he had moved in the right way and in the end...there he was, taking the sun with Bellatrix who was trying her best to get rid of the petrification and probably choke him with a straw, if she got her hands on the glass.

He sighed and bound the woman with ropes.

He didn't want to kill a perfectly usable servant, but on the other hand he couldn't show his hand yet.

Everything was going according to plan...

And that, more than anything else, was what mattered.

Author's notes

For those who don't know, Chp1 and Chp2 have been beta'ed and re-uploaded. That said, will things 'ever' be normal? Let us hope so.

We glimpse more into Voldemort (Real) and into Gellert's fate. Things are moving towards an interesting Hogsmeade Weekend and an even more interesting breaking of the Time Continuum.

I blame the Nargles.

PS: The Nine of March is my Birthday, aye!

Harry Wylt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter 8

Luna should have just called a Professor. The girl should have just walked back in, talked to Professor Sprout and got the situation resolved. This was what Harry was thinking, as he made his way behind the blond haired girl. The forest was as tall and massive as it had been when he had first led Heather out of there. The thick branches obscured the light, casting everything into a dark penumbra. He widened his eyes as he remembered the basilisk. Heather was still asleep in Professor Snape's mansion. He would have to talk to the man again eventually, but till then he had other things to do.

He mentally groaned at the sight of Luna not relenting in her search for her book bag, instead walking forward without a care in the world. Harry was starting to hope someone would come from the castle and stop the girl, or at least do something. Apparently, the deeper the girl went the surer he was it would come up to him to save her.

This still didn't solve the mystery of the Time continuum being broken to smithereens, but at least it gave an apt idea of what was going to happen. Somehow, he'd probably nearly die in the hours to come in front of Luna, and the girl would return to Hogwarts to find him. He wondered what could possibly manage to nearly kill him in the forest...devil's snare were deeper down, as were the trolls and the centaurs.

It couldn't possibly be another Cerberus and while it was true that the forbidden forest housed many dangerous creatures, he doubted any would be that close.

Finally, Luna stopped and looked upwards. He did so too and rolled his eyes. The girl's bag was hanging from one of the taller branches of a tree. He could see the younger Ravenclaw clench her fists and bit her lip in frustration, before taking out her wand and murmur.

"Wingardium Leviosa." The spell failed.

"Wingardium Leviosa!" The spell failed again.

Now closer to tears, Luna crumbled on the ground with her shoulders trembling. He frowned but kept quiet, as the girl began to sob.

"It's not fair." She cried, "Why are they mean only to me?"

He awkwardly took a few steps back, hiding behind a tree as he unclasped the invisibility cloak and put it beneath the invisible one, before emerging while making a great deal of noise. He knew better than appearing in Luna's moment of weakness, and indeed he was right. As soon as the girl heard him come, she quickly wiped away her tears and turned to look at him with her usual dreamy gaze.

"Oh, hello Harry." She began with a small smile. "Are you too hunting for Crumple-Horned Snorkacks?"

"Yeah," he replied with a nod, his gaze turning upwards to the hanging bag. "You need a hand?"

She widened her eyes, before nodding meekly. "The Nargles were extremely petty today."

"I see." He slowly took his wand out, pointing it at the branch and muttered a quick 'Ico'.

A set of holes appeared through the bark of the branch that soon snapped and fell downwards. He muttered the cushioning charm seconds before the bag impacted with the ground, and then smiled as he grasped the bag to hand it over to its owner.

"There you go." He replied, "We can go now."

"Thank you." Luna smiled, before turning her silvery grey gaze to the direction they had come from and freezing like she had seen a ghost.

He slowly turned around too and sucked in his breath sharply.

A low growling sound reached his ears, as his eyes gazed upon a creature that looked like a jaguar. Its fur was matted, in patches while its eyes narrow and its teeth sharp and jagged. A small cloud of dark vapors oozed out of the creature's mouth, which slowly snapped open and close making odd cracking sounds. The vapors

passed through the grass and killed it, turning it into a rotten mush that seemed to be putrefying with every second it passed.

He paled.

That was a Nundu.

Behind him, Luna gasped and let out a startled cry. It was all that the creature needed to flex its powerful muscles and pounce.

The roar that escaped the Nundu's mouth was followed by the thick toxic breath that like a cloud passed through them. He quickly brought his hand in front of his mouth and nose, waving his wand to create wind.

"Ventus!"

The cloud recoiled, but the Nundu didn't. One of its clawed paws shot forward as the beast jumped to grab a hold on his body and bite him in the neck, like any beast did to kill its prey. Behind him he could hear Luna scream as time seemed to slowly still. He barely grasped the Time Turner, before the creature's attack connected with his left hand and forced him to cry out in pain and fall on the ground, clutching his wounded limb.

"Run!" He yelled to Luna, "Run!" He added. The girl looked at him with a fearful gaze, before turning her back on him and starting to run away. He groaned as he could feel his hand and arm slowly lose sensibility. He knew the Nundu's breath and bite was toxic, but he didn't know about his claws.

The Nundu growled as it slowly prowled towards him, its size like that of a small bear. He pushed with his legs on the ground, trying to move back as his left hand clutched unresponsively the Time-Turner. His right hand trembled, but he pushed the sides of the contraption once just as the creature launched once more its body against his, jaw open and ready to bite.

He disappeared.

He groaned as his body landed with a strong thud and a sharp snap sound against another tree in the forest. He winced as he realized the Nundu's claws were probably laced with some sort of analgesic:

his left hand was now broken from the impact, yet he didn't feel pain even with the bones clearly protruding from the flesh. He paled and turned green, avoiding the gory sight and mentally wishing it to disappear. Grabbing his wand with his right hand...

He knew what he had to do.

He just didn't like it.

"Episkey." There wasn't pain. He frowned as he realized that no, the spell hadn't worked. He was starting to breathe in quickly now: he couldn't go back like that and there was no way he'd be able to survive the blood loss unless he stopped this. The ground was already starting to color itself red, and as he began to tremble and whiten, he remembered.

His right hand held the signs of deep scarring related to fire, while his left one appeared to have been badly broken and then put back together.

There was only one spell that could repair anything, even the flesh, but leave behind deep scars.

"Reparo." And with that soft murmur, the bones fused back together and the flesh knitted itself. There it was now, the left hand of King. Suddenly, spikes of pain erupted from within his own arm as his nerves began to flare in pain. He screamed as the spell proceeded to repair all his dead nerves, courtesy of the Nundu's toxins in its claws.

He closed his eyes as his back hit the trunk of the tree, his breathing ragged and his entire body covered in sweat. He could hear the forest's noises all around him, as well as the feeling of tiny pricks running alongside his skin. He winced as he slowly got back on his feet. His left hand did move, albeit it felt stuffy, as if there was some sort of pudding or jelly between his fingers.

He looked up at the sky, and then wracked his brain trying to remember what time it was. He had gone back an hour probably. If he had done that, then his past-self was now at the greenhouses, following Luna in the forest. The girl had run away, and he had seen her in the future, which meant that his job was done. Now he just

had to reach for the dining room, and he would hopefully be there before his future-self.

But this still didn't solve the mystery of how he had gotten the information in the first place, and by whom. He frowned as he realized that nothing told him about finding loyal creatures in the forest. Nothing of what he had done had been of help, except for scarring his left hand just like King's own.

This didn't make sense. Unless...Unless he still had to help Luna escape. She hadn't run towards the castle, considering the direction of the Nundu...she had been running deeper into the forest!

He groaned as he spun around and began to walk back. His left side was burning up, but he couldn't just wait. Time wouldn't permit it. Considering everything, wasn't it more probable for him to be dead actually? What if the future-him in the past at the meal had been polyjuiced? It did make some sort of twisted sense, not to be exactly him but someone else, delivering him the news.

His steps took him back to the starting point, to where the Nundu was supposed to come out eventually. This time, however, he decided to float in the air with a Wingardium Leviosa. At the very least it would avoid another mishap with the creature. He frowned as he saw Past-Luna walk through the forest, silently followed by him. He couldn't clearly see himself, but he definitively could feel some sort of awry tingle on his body. He dashed behind a tree and the feeling passed.

Was this how paradoxes were avoided? So then how had his past-self ended up so close to his future-self in order to kill him?

She had told him. His eyes widened as he clearly remembered that there was a woman, or a girl, behind all of this. There was a she. He gritted his teeth as he came back to the spot where Luna's handbag would be dropped soon.

He crouched against one of the thicker branches and then waited calmly, his left hand limp near him. He heard the low growling sounds coming from below, and a quick peek showed him the Nundu actually having its home nearby. It stood up with its ears twitching, its massive bulk slowly turning to the left side. It began to move quietly, its toxic breath killing the undergrowth it trudged upon.

He heard the sound of feet approaching then, and turned to stare at Luna reaching for the correct branch and the handbag on it. The Wingardium Leviosa spell failing only gave more time for the Nundu to get in position, to cut away the escape of its preys.

Harry slowly stood up. The Nundu growled. His past-self yelled at Luna to escape, and the girl did so going deeper into the forest. He slowly floated and began to chase after the girl, the Wingardium Leviosa not actually making it an easy flight. For one thing, he couldn't steer or turn.

He saw the Nundu, devoid now of prey since his past-self had gone back in the past, turn and start sniffing on the ground for the girl. That now made sense.

The massive beast began to dash, appearing as nothing less than a yellow and black bullet, as it pursued Luna. Nundus, especially grown ones, weren't known as Wizard killers for nothing. They generally held a thick enough skin, a toxic breath, poisonous saliva, an incredible speed and a human-like cunningness that warranted nothing less than full attention when fighting one.

At least a hundred wizards were used to hunt one. He was a single one.

Put it clearly, he held no chances, but that didn't mean he couldn't try and save Luna. If he just grasped her, he could send her back in the past and then bring her to safety. That was when he heard a sharp cry through the air. He nervously gulped down his anxiousness, as the Wingardium Leviosa brought him closer to the scene. Luna had still been alive in the future: she would be safe.

Indeed, as he neared the area he couldn't help but take a breath of relief in seeing a few centaurs holding the Nundu at bay with their lances. The mighty magical creatures were stomping the ground with their hooves, pushing the tip of their lances forwards and surrounding Luna who was crying and sobbing. One of the centaurs bellowed while beating its chest.

"Come on, fool beast! Is the might of Ronan enough to sway you away?" The centaur's mocking tone was clear to hear, and yet the

Nundu simply showed its teeth, before opening its mouth. In that moment an arrow shot forward from another centaur at a diagonal angle, but while it bounced off the thick skin, it chipped a tooth of the creature that fell on the ground.

Then the Nundu roared, and the toxic cloud began to move closer to the centaurs.

Harry pointed his wand at the fog, before whispering.

"Ventus."

The burst of wind suddenly struck through the cloud, sending it to roll off away from the herd. In that moment another centaur grasped its lance, and threw it at the Nundu's feet. The beast growled, but then suddenly retreated.

"Child?" One of the centaurs said, holding Luna's shoulders. "The beast is gone."

"Wh...What about Harry?" The blond haired girl replied between tears. He was about to move down, when he stopped. He realized this was what Luna had meant, being afraid of his death. He couldn't move, and he didn't. Another centaur, called Firenze by the others, gently held the girl between its arms as it began to run towards Hogwarts.

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

He turned to gaze at the trunk of the tree he had been resting against, and quietly flicked his wand at it. The bark came away easily, and as he looked at the square section he couldn't help but slowly morph it. First were the straps made of leather, second was the wood becoming gold and silver, third were the holes for mouth and eyes. He slid the mask on, and then breathed in.

His invisibility cloak turned silver, no longer hiding him but working as his mantle.

Then, the Nundu roared and pounced at the retreating Centaurs from the back.

He froze at the sight of the savage beast having waited till the Centaurs were turned to attack. He should have expected something like that, but he hadn't thought about it. The centaur called Ronan fell on the ground with its back wounded and its neck bleeding as the creature attacked savagely. The other centaurs tried to get the Nundu away, but the lances broke and the arrows failed to penetrate from so close.

He closed his eyes.

Loyal creatures.

He gritted his teeth as he slowly began to move his wand.

"Trudo!" The ethereal lances flew downwards, one of them managing to bludgeon the creature into jumping to the side, growling while looking around for the source of its harm. The centaurs began to cough, slowly bringing their hands to their throats as they kneeled. He brought his wand forward once more.

"Ico!" Holes appeared on the ground, as the silvery lights of the spell struck but bounced off the beast back. The Nundu roared, its eyes looking for his prey. "Excudo!" The spell twirled as it hit the ground, the dirt cracking open as it twirled as if a whirlpool had been formed. The beast jumped away, roaring as its eyes finally settled on him, up above.

He was after all wearing a silver cloak and a gold and silver mask.

"Shit."

He jumped out of the way, falling downwards with a cushioning charm, just in time to avoid the creature's incredible speed in running up a tree and then pouncing on the branch he had been a moment before, snapping it in half.

Harry landed with a soft thud on the ground, whipping his wand in the direction of the beast and screaming to the top of his lungs.

"Ignis!" The fire sprouted from his wand swiftly, but the Nundu avoided it with a well-timed jump to the side, before moving closer. He flicked his wrist, fire still sprouting out from the tip of his wand, as the beast found itself scorched and singed slightly, its fur matted and

burned. This didn't stop it however, and as Harry gritted his teeth, holding his wand tightly, the Nundu simply began to walk forward, fire burning the beast's body but not managing to stop its slow advance.

Sweat began to fall on Harry's forehead as the dangerous creature took one more step forward. Then the fire stopped and the creature, coiled like a spring and ready to pounce, jumped. Excalibur met the sides of the creature, cutting through the beast's left paw and sending it to sprawl on the ground, blood oozing out of the wound.

The Nundu let out a roar as the cloud of toxins reached for him like a tidal wave. Excalibur was blaring with flames of a dark crimson color, and as Harry pointed his sword forward he hissed at the incoming toxins.

"Ventus!" The wind picked on the flames and sprouted up, the flaming circles erupting from his sword burned through the cloud and against the Nundu. The wind recoiled as the creature roared again with strength, sending the fire that sprouted from Excalibur's blade against him. Harry hissed as he took a step backwards, avoiding the swipe from the beast's right paw while his own right hand burned from the fire of his blade. The Nundu's face struck the ground, still not used to missing its left limb. In that moment, Harry flung Excalibur downwards, ignoring the pain as the fires flew upwards rather than downwards.

There was a meow sound, soon followed by a crunch and a snap as he twisted the blade through the creature's head, passing through the skull and the brain. The fire soon began to burn the beast from within, plumes of smoke and sparkles of fire igniting the surroundings of the wound.

Then he took a step backwards, soon followed by another one as the Nundu burst up in flames, its toxic gases inflammable.

"The stars..." A voice whispered in awe, coming from his right side. He turned to look at the creature in question and brought up an eyebrow. The centaur called Firenze had come back without Luna, having already delivered her to Hogwarts' safety.

"I am Duke Wyllt." Harry replied, catching his breath and wincing from the pain on his right hand. "Hogwarts and its lands are mine."

The centaur nodded slowly, before staring at the dead Nundu once more.

"That creature harassed our young and these forest's habitants since last year." Firenze spoke, "You have done us a great deed."

"When the horn will blare," Harry replied, "I expect the favor to be returned upon the tides of war."

"If you are the one who walks among the wild animals," Firenze answered, "then fear not: we will honor the oath of our ancestors."

"I am him." He chuckled grimly, "For all the good that it does." Excalibur morphed, resuming its wand-like appearance. "And for all the good that it has brought me."

"No power comes without a price." Firenze acknowledged. "Mars is up in the sky, brighter than ever." The centaur spoke, "It is amusing to hear you speak of war, as if you knew just why it shines so high."

"I don't," he whispered back, "but I can suspect."

"Those who play with fire are often burned by it." The centaur cryptically retorted. "And those who play with time are often lost in it."

He tensed as his eyes narrowed on the centaur, which merely made a bitter smile back.

"I will have to tend to the bodies of my fellow centaurs now." Firenze whispered, "You know the road out of the forest, do you not?"

"I think I do." He replied somberly, looking at the corpses of the dead centaurs. He turned to leave, and as his steps took him away from the scene, he heard from behind him the start of a lament in an ancient tongue. The song was sad, and as it twisted his insides he understood that it was probably a hymn to the dead of the centaurs. He walked through the undergrowth and past the bushes, the song never leaving his ears as he kept on walking.

The silver mantle on his shoulders attracted the birds, which began to chirp as they followed the source of light.

Soon the hymn was followed by the sound of chirping, by the grunting of boars, by the clacking of tongues belonging to the deer. The barks of the wolves mingled with the tittering noise of fangs clicking one to another coming from the spiders, the loud booms of troll feet hitting the ground in a rhythm and the branches that swooned over the wind.

He reached the border of the forest followed by the animals of the wild, and as his cloak hid him rather than display him, while the mask fell on the ground now once more a piece of bark, he smiled. The animals dispersed in a few instants, leaving him to invisibly make his way towards the castle.

He'd sit down at the table there and then, and speak of loyal creatures when the time would come.

That much he owed to the past-him.

Lillian Potter

"It wasn't my fault!" She screamed at her mother. "I was not wrong!"

"Lillian!" Her mother chastised her, "This behavior is unbecoming! You cannot curse your roommates—"

"Yes, I can!" She snapped back at her, "Just like they can talk behind my back I can hex them!"

"Think about what you're saying young miss!" Lily snapped back, "You can't be thinking you're right after cursing those poor girls, can you!?"

"Yes! Yes, yes and one hundred times more yes!" She yelled back. "I am not wrong, they had to be punished and since nobody would have done anything to them I had to be the one to bring justice!"

"This isn't justice Lillian! This is revenge! You acted like a petty five years old and for that I'm confiscating your wand."

"No." She replied, shaking her head.

The two females were screaming at one another from opposite sides of the kitchen table of Potter's manor. Lillian had done all that she could to try and get her point across, but her mother refused to understand it.

"No?" Lily brought up an eyebrow, "You don't say no to me, Miss. You hand over that wand right now!"

"No." She shook her head, fighting back the tears as she took a step back. "I'm not."

"Accio Lillian's wand!" Her mother exclaimed, and soon the wand in her back pocket flew out and straight into the older woman's free hand. "You're grounded for the entire weekend. You'll see Harry when you get back to school, but if this is how you're going to be then maybe I should just ask Dumbledore to keep you suspended for another week."

Lillian was about to scream back at her mother, but then she stopped midway, with her mouth open. Her mother was already waiting for her to scream again probably, and she wouldn't give her that satisfaction.

"All right." Lillian coolly said. "All right." She whispered again. She turned and walked towards the door of the kitchen, giving back to her mother one last look. "But I hate you."

And then she ran out of the kitchen and up the stairs to her room, which she bolted shut.

Voldemort

"Bellerophon." The Dark Lord spoke with an amused tone, standing within the cool shade of the Parthenon. His eyes glazed over the young blond haired man with a fit muscle tone and completely oiled, wearing but a loincloth. "Are you ready?"

"Yes, my lord." The Greek boy commented, kneeling down and thrusting upwards his left arm.

Voldemort smiled, as he brought his wand down upon the still pristine hand.

"Morsmordre." Voldemort hissed as the tattoo burned itself within the skin of the Greek boy, who didn't even scream albeit his face contorted as if he was suffering through the pains of hell. "Now rise and prove me your worth."

Bellerophon turned, opening his right hand and aiming towards one of three bodies tied to a column.

"Cleanse the Parthenon from this filth, Bellerophon."

From the hand of the young blond haired teen fire appeared, that soon scorched through the air as it landed on the bodies tied to the column. The family screamed as the flames burned through their flesh, yet Bellerophon didn't react even as the screams of the children among the three became high pitched with fear. Within instants, three scorched and black skeletons remained where once a loving mother, a caring father and a small child stood.

And not a tear was shed as the Greek boy turned and bowed to its lord.

"Well done, Bellerophon. Well done."

He smiled as one of his new Death Eaters, or Trógon Thanátou as they called themselves in Greek, marched out of the room.

He was Lord Voldemort, unquestioned ruler of the world: whoever dared fight his claim would suffer death at his hands and those of his followers. Nobody was foolish enough to challenge him now, not after the shard of the Diadem had been absorbed.

The Diary was destroyed. The Ring shattered. The Diadem burned. The Cup destroyed. The Locket cleansed. The half of a shard within the Potter boy removed from existence. The other half within the Potter girl still there, weak but growing. He was all that remained now.

But if he was all that remained...then why was he missing one piece?

"Lucius." He curtly commented, seeing the Death Eater once loyal to Ring and now loyal to him, "How is your son faring?"

"My Lord: he has done what you asked." Lucius replied, bringing forth the Daily Prophet. "The boy has been dosed."

"I see. Your son is proving to be most resourceful. He truly is a Slytherin." Voldemort smiled, "Are the men gathering, Lucius?"

"They are my lord. The shipments have been sent." The Dark Lord smiled once more.

"Excellent. Has our potions' master made himself known?"

"Not yet my Lord: he is kept under strict surveillance."

"As long as he delivers the last shipment to whom it must go..." Voldemort acquiesced. "Failure is not an option, of course."

"Yes, my Lord."

"Tell me, Lucius." Voldemort's eyes turned thoughtful. "Who is stronger, between a Lord and a King?"

The pale blond man looked startled for a moment, before reigning in his features and answering as smoothly as possible.

"That depends on the cunningness and purity of blood of both, my Lord."

Voldemort smiled.

"And between a King and an Emperor?"

"I would say the Emperor, my Lord, but a Lord of—"

"This was not a trick question, Lucius." He interrupted his servant. "For when everything will be completed...I think a change of name will be most welcomed."

"Yes, my Emperor."

Voldemort smiled.

"Always the fast learner, Lucius."

Harry Potter

Saturday morning saw Harry James Potter walk in the study hall, flanked by Draco Malfoy and Hermione Granger, with Ginny Malfoy and Luna Lovegood behind him. His left arm was firmly wrapped within a cast, held to his chest by gauze circling his neck.

Madam Pomfrey apparently didn't like it when people used Reparo on their own wounds, risk of death by blood loss notwithstanding. She had fussed over his wound as if it was about to explode any moment in a gore of pus and burning flesh. Now in a cast, he was finding out the hard way that being only right-handed was a pain.

The study hall normally held shelves with books and tables for four students each. Now it held a wide circular table which could easily house over a hundred students. The table wasn't completely filled, instead holding barely a few people.

Among them the older Weasleys seemed to be standing on the side closer to where Dumbledore was sitting. Bowls of Lemon Drops stood at equal distances from each chair, probably a courtesy of the headmaster. The old wizard smiled as they neared, but Harry merely nodded before sitting directly opposite of him, soon flanked by his men.

Tracey Davis arrived a few seconds later, sitting down on his side just like Justin and Seamus. Neville, Pansy, Padma and Parvati, Ron, Lavender Brown and Romilda Vane sat near the Headmaster. On his side, Crabbe sat with his eyes downcast, Daphne Greengrass nearby together with a younger version of her, her younger sister Astoria.

Michael Corner and Terry Boot went near Dumbledore, just like Lisa Turpin.

"Well," Albus began after a few more minutes. "Let us begin."

Silence followed for a few minutes. Nobody spoke as there seemed to be an unquestioned and silent rule to let the titans fight beforehand their battles, and just merely watch.

"Headmaster." Harry began coolly, "The King's men first and foremost objective is the removal of the House system from

Hogwarts and the insertion of the House-free dormitory division that was put in place by the Architect when he first built Hogwarts."

"That is an understandable feature." Albus replied calmly. Harry's eyes narrowed. The man was giving away terrain without even a 'but' in reply. "Although I must ask how you plan on doing this: the castle's magic has, sadly, started to deplete itself." There was silence for a moment, as shock reigned into the features of many sitting on the table.

"I had my first thought on the matter when I was told of the wards having holes," the headmaster was most forthcoming of one of his lacking features, and that didn't bode well. "When I realized even the magic of the portraits was waning, I hastily tried to provide a solution." There was a small smile there, and Harry knew the man was lying.

The next instant, he felt as if something had flung him out, and suddenly Dumbledore's face turned more somber and less easy to read.

He frowned, before moving his eyes to the sides of the old wizard, to the half-empty stare of Ron Weasley who was thinking about what to eat for brunch to that of the twins who seemingly had set an explosive in...

He nearly let out a cry and a scream. As it was, he hastily closed his open mouth at the realization that had sunk in.

He was reading people's minds! He was using Legillimency!

"As you may see, the portraits have return. However rearranging the dormitories of all the students and professor would be unfathomable at present and even for the next few years..."

"Physical transfers would be out then?" Harry replied calmly.

"A lot of students have already grown up with this system, and will continue their schooling here following the same precepts. It would be a wrong thing to move students out of their dormitories for the years to come, as they would naturally give the passwords around, thus making the security of the dorms a problem."

"A problem for whom, Headmaster?" He brought up an eyebrow. "This is a school, not a military lab or a private area. While Teachers should have passwords to prevent students from entering their dorms, I fail to see why dormitories should. Isn't it risky? What if help is needed in a dormitory, but nobody can get through because he or she lacks the password? Sometimes life or death is decided in a matter of seconds, not minutes."

"Valid points, Mister Potter." Albus conceded with a small smile. "I see you are indeed worthy of the house of Ravenclaw then."

"You're missing the point." He replied shaking his head. "It is not a matter of houses. There are clearly smart people in Gryffindors just like there are cunning students in Hufflepuff." He smiled, "There are evil Ravenclaws and good Slytherins too. To call me worthy of belonging to a house that should favor the witty? It makes no sense, especially considering the sheer amount of imbeciles that inhabit it at the moment." His eyes moved towards Turpin, who seemed to shrink under his gaze.

"Isn't that right, Miss 'I hid Luna's shoes in the bathroom toilet'? Or Mister 'let's put some scratching powder in his bed tonight'?" His gaze moved to Michael Corner as he said that, and he enjoyed seeing the boy pale. "Or maybe should I talk about the nice and homey group called 'let's ambush them at Hogsmeade' that sits next to you, Headmaster?" Ron gasped, soon followed by Pansy widening her eyes.

"I have ears and eyes everywhere." He added thoughtfully, looking straight at Neville who seemed to uneasily look back at him, "Even among your midst my men thrive." Then he winked as he brought both of his hands clasped together. "Think about what Hogwarts as a whole could do for the world, Headmaster." He began.

"And what would happen if the houses were abolished, Mister Potter?" Dumbledore began after a few minutes of silence. "You think everyone would hold hands immediately? That old rancor would be forgotten so easily?"

"If you do not demolish the wall," Harry replied, "Then how can you understand that the other side isn't any different from yours? Are you perhaps afraid of a second Voldemort," many at the table shuddered, but not him. Not he, not Albus, not Hermione and not

even Draco seemed to budge at the mention of the name. "Only one that may conquer all within the school, without the safety nets of the houses?"

"No." Dumbledore spoke back, "Mister Potter, do you know what the houses provide? They provide a home outside of home. They provide a family where there might be none. They are called 'Houses' because of that. To remove this, to remove what they embody, don't you think you might be just aiming too high? Don't you think people would rather be at home, than placed with others only because of their age? Houses help students socialize with one another. Without that starting push, can you think of the consequences?"

"So favoritism should be left to march unchecked." He replied calmly. "So loyalty should only be of Hufflepuffs. Cunningness only to the snakes and bravery to the Gryffindors? Should I demand you remove from the Gryffindors those who are smart, because they clearly were badly sorted?" He queried right back. "The starting push can be given by the faculty members themselves. A conjoint effort would work better, don't you think?"

"Why change something that isn't broken, Mister Potter? What is this vehemence that you possess and pushes you to lash out against this? Can't you understand that Houses are not a detriment to Hogwarts, but an added bonus?"

"Until they start choking out prejudice." He replied immediately, "How many here believed me a dark lord in the making, me who was wrongfully accused!?" He stood up slamming his right hand on the table. "How many of the brave believed one of their own a murderer!? How many among the witty are no more than stupid bullies!? Look at yourself and look at your Houses! Tell me they're a bonus again; tell me they're without fault and without question!"

Harry pointed an accusing index at Ron. "That bloody imbecile over there already plans on how to get even with me, when I offered him forgiveness and to let bygones be bygones! That one over there," he pointed at Neville who seemed to flush in embarrassment, "Was someone I called a friend." His tone turned sorrowful. "And if that is the loyalty of the Hufflepuffs, then your prejudices are deeper than you may think."

"Mister Potter! These are all singular cases! Many more have passed through the halls and the common rooms of the Houses and proved themselves true to their nature."

"That's the problem, Headmaster." He muttered, "Children act upon what they believe will get them the prize candy. You mold children into believing they will get prizes if they fall in line and act like their house is meant to act, and then you surprise yourself that it works? The House cup is nothing more than a scam, points deducting and giving are no more than empty threats and treats." He shook his head. "Change has to happen, Professor."

Dumbledore's face turned somber in that moment, as if somehow the word 'change' had switched something within the old man's face.

"So would you destroy an entire world, just to begin anew with another, Mister Potter? Would you raze to the ground the fundamental laws and traditions that are the bones of the Wizardry society without as much as a thought?"

He took a deep breath, before replying in a slow controlled voice.

"If they hinder the growth of said society, then I would burn them down to ashes and start from their charred remains. That has always been the level of commitment I demanded with entering the King's men club. Nothing less was required, but nothing more was needed."

"Everything or nothing is not a good political move, Mister Potter." Dumbledore replied keenly, his icy blue eyes settling on him once more, but this time he avoided to meet his gaze.

"Maybe, but when those who choose to compromise fail to deliver, and the choices are between anarchy and extremism... Do I need to tell you the events of the past?" He replied. "People will choose that which has never failed them before and violence..." He took a deep breath, "You will have to agree with me that a dead man can spout no enemy propaganda."

"Every life is precious, Mister Potter." Dumbledore retorted hotly, "You are but a child if you think differently."

"So by your own admission I should have delivered a captured Salazar to the Ministry, making it all the more difficult for me to defeat him?" He replied with a knowing smirk. "Should I have talked to the Troll in first year, when it nearly ate Lillian? Should I have spoken to Igor Karkaroff, who sacrificed children and women alike for blood rituals? Pray tell me Headmaster: when is it that a life stops being precious?"

"You are speaking out of spite, Mister Potter." Albus intoned gravely. "Objectiveness is something that comes with age and experience. You are only fourteen, after all, not yet an adult. I do not fault you for trying to change the world but you must understand that these...childish thoughts and ideas...won't get you anywhere."

He closed his eyes and breathed deeply, calming himself as he finally whispered out.

"If we live our lives without dreams, Headmaster...do we truly live to begin with? You call my dreams childish and impossible probably, but what if all that it takes is someone that believes in them?" He opened them again, and opened his right arm to encircle those on his side of the table. "How many times do children ask why people do stupid stuff, and how many times do they suggest childish solutions? But what if they worked, Headmaster? What if those stupid ideas actually worked?"

"We are not in a fairy tale, Mister Potter." The man replied with his twinkling eyes. "We are in the real world."

"Aren't wizards supposed to belong to fairy tales, Headmaster?" He retorted. "Isn't the phoenix but a myth? Isn't magic but an illusion? Tales can become reality eventually. Think about it, are you actually opposing me because you are sure I will fail, or because you fear I will actually change the world?"

For a single fleeting instant, Harry saw Dumbledore's face turn thoughtful, but it was only that: a second. In the next, the old wizened man stood up and politely bowed his head.

"This has been a most enlightening conversation, Mister Potter. Alas I fear I will have to ask you to stop participating until you are ready to admit to your wrong thoughts."

He breathed calmly, before slowly nodding.

"You may try and steal an idea from its creator, Dumbledore...but you will never be as good as its original owner." Then Harry turned and left.

Soon chairs moved out, and he could hear feet hastily move to follow him. He walked briskly towards the seventh floor, just one floor below the study hall that was on the eighth one. He trudged thrice upon the room of requirements, and as the majestic room used once for his meeting opened up to him in all of its grandeur, he stilled in front of the suits of armor. They would call him out if he walked through them.

He turned and smiled. Hermione Granger walked with a bit of awe first through the suits, which rang out her name clearly. Her name was soon followed by all the original members of the King's men, until a few more walked close to him.

The Greengrass sisters seemed both slightly torn about being there, but at his indication of passing through the suits they both complied. The youngest one nearly darted out of the room as they announced their names and their family. There was also a Gryffindor girl, Fay Dunbar, who was then followed by two Hufflepuffs: Susan Bones and Megan Jones.

"Hannah insisted." Susan whispered. "Said I'd understand if I simply came...You spoke to Dumbledore as an equal and everything else you said...I don't know but I'll trust Hannah." He nodded to her with a smile.

Next followed an older Ravenclaw girl.

"I'm Cho, and..." The girl was seemingly flustered and Harry merely pointed at the line of suits of armor. She gracefully nodded and beamed him a smile, before passing through them.

The last one...

The last one of the line was Neville.

"How did you know?" The boy asked him, "You know I wanted to talk to you, but—"

"Save it, Neville." Harry replied bitterly. "I told you once, and you didn't believe me then. Now I am no longer that boy, so don't expect things to be the same."

Then he turned and closed the door behind him.

The suits of armor in front of him looked ready to call his name, but stilled and instead kneeled as he passed through them in absolute silence. The large table that held his seat a bit taller than the others now looked positively more filled than before. Those who had already been there once held contrite and nervous looks, while the newcomers were displaying wonder and amazement.

He sat down on his chair, his throne, and as the rest of the room fell quiet he began to talk.

"We begin our first meeting of the King's men of this term today. So mote it be."

"So mote it be." The rest of the men and women replied.

He smiled.

He could change the world, whether the other understood and followed or not wasn't important...He could do this.

He could defeat King.

Hermione Granger

The morning had passed by in a daze. Between Harry's actions, his talking, and everything else that had happened she had nearly forgotten about her Hogsmeade weekend with him. Her Harry hadn't of course. She held a giggle at the base of her throat at the thought. Hers. The man she loved was taking her out on a nice weekend date through Hogsmeade. Nothing could go wrong, especially not after having settled those pesky guys who had planned to get even by calling them off right in front of Dumbledore.

Hogsmeade was wonderful. There was barely any snow, even as January was usually cold in Scotland, there was little to no white painting the landscape. Her breath condensed just like that of Harry,

an unmistakable sign they were both alive and well. If she thought back at her prison time, she couldn't help but suppress as shudder.

Back then, she would never have believed her luck.

"So, where are we going first?" She asked her arm suddenly linking with his. She bit her lip as Harry looked at her a bit startled, but said nothing. She knew she was going at it a bit strongly, but with what little assets she had it was an all or nothing battle.

She wasn't going to let anyone else, especially that blushing older Ravenclaw 'Cho' get in her way. Or that dreamy second year 'Luna' or even Ginny for what it mattered. Harry was hers, and that was final. It was as final as the fact that Owls were in fifth year and Newts were what mattered. She knew that Harry would never directly harm her, and that was more than she could say of the rest of her friends.

She didn't know where to put Malfoy to begin with. Draco seemed loyal, but he was a Slytherin and even before that he was the son of Lucius Malfoy. Death Eaters, the lot of them was probably just using her Harry for their own purposes.

Her Harry. Her Harry.

It rolled well on the tongue and also in the mind. Maybe she could write it in her diary tonight, when he'd say yes to them being together? Harry was most handsomely gliding through the streets of Hogsmeade now, letting her set the pace just like a perfect gentleman would. They walked through Honeydukes, where he bought her some sugar quills, and then through Zonko, where he acquired a few fireworks.

She didn't know why he bought some fireworks, but it seemed as if he was now fidgeting as he neared what looked to be an apothecary of sorts.

They stopped just as soon as the sign came into view.

"The Naughty Witch. Apothecary for the education, help and revival of sexual life."

She suddenly felt her entire face heat up to a nasty red, as she looked over at Harry who was frowning while reading a slip of paper in his hand. He seemed lost in thoughts for a moment, before his face too morphed into a bright red color.

"Got the wrong address from Madam Pomfrey." He replied calmly and then turned around. She stilled.

"What address did you ask her?" She asked.

"Nothing important." Harry's reply hit her strangely, as she frowned.

"It was for me, wasn't it?" She closed her eyes as she shuddered. "What was it?" Her voice was cracking. Maybe he liked girls with a bit of a sultry tone? Maybe he was into seductive minxes or—

"Hermione, are you sure you want me, of all people?"

She opened her eyes as fast as she could, grabbing him maybe a bit roughly by the shoulders as she faced him straight ahead without blinking. They were mere centimeters apart and she could see those dark green eyes of him look at her with surprise. Their breaths condensed together into small white clouds, and in that moment, in that precise instant...

"Yes." She whispered.

And then she kissed him.

She brought her arms around the boy's neck, tightening her grip and afraid he might just run away if she let go. She didn't. She held on to him and kept on kissing him until in the end he began to kiss back. She simply melted away against him, not caring of the passerby or of the possible catcalls they might receive or the rumors that might spread.

Harry was hers.

Nobody would take him away from her, and if she had to go at him strong...then she'd do it.

She would have her knight in shining armor. She would have her prince. She would have her hero.

And he would be all hers.

Forever and ever, as they lived happily ever after.

Author's notes

'Has this become HHr?' = No.

'But they're...' = No.

'But...' = No.

'Are you going the creepy way with this?' = Probably. Those who have read any of my stories that held 'Yandere' know what to expect.

As said before, until the start of Fourth Year I am not choosing any pairing.

'You killed a Nundu with Harry' = in my defense, it would be like going against a tank with an orbital bombardment. Harry had Excalibur, and he got the Nundu by surprise. He did come out badly from him and King's wounds were justified after all...still missing those on the face however, but we'll get to those too.

The next chapter will hold 'dancing', 'medals' and 'what is Future-Harry doing?'.

Harry Wylt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter 9

His breath was short now. He could feel his heart pound in his ribcage and his tongue still tasting of, well, of her. He didn't know how to define the taste, but it clearly wasn't something he had eaten before. It didn't taste like strawberry or vanilla. It wasn't spicy or sour or sweet. Her lips had the consistency of marshmallows, which he could define. Her breath too seemed short, but she was smiling at him. She was still clutching his shoulder blades and holding him to her, but now she wasn't actually putting strength behind it.

She nuzzled her head against his chest, sighing in relief as she gently began to rock to the sides. He instinctively hugged her back, just like he had kissed her after sensing her distress. Hermione wasn't a bad looking girl, he knew that. At the same time he knew this was wrong. It felt as if he was abusing her trust, in leading her on. What choice did he have, however? He couldn't break the girl, not when her only source of solace was him.

He was a pitiful excuse of a man, but then again if this was all it took to make the girl happy, who was he to say no? He didn't dislike the kisses certainly, and holding a girl between their arms had always been one of the most desired things for males from hormone age upwards, but he still couldn't help dislodge the feeling of wrongness within him.

"Harry." She whispered his name like a sort of plead, making him cringe. "I love you."

He clenched slightly his hands, which resulted in tightening his hug to the girl, before replying with a parched throat and a tongue that seemed made of lead.

"Yeah, me too."

She moved a bit back to stare at him, a bright smile on her face as her eyes seemed to shine brightly from those three words. Three mere words and Hermione was linking her arm to his own. Thankfully he didn't actually have a broken arm, just a cast on his left hand laced with a scar reducing solution. He heard her sigh

contentedly, and as she dropped her head against his shoulder he merely blinked once.

They began to walk again through Hogsmeade, this time actually eliciting some attention from the students there that had seen them walk around before. The difference after all was in the details: now they were the perfect postcard example of a happy and in love couple.

"I think I started liking you since I was in first year," Hermione suddenly said. "I just didn't know it yet. You saved me from the Troll and I just forgot about you...maybe I was too shy to talk to you in person? Then you saved me from Azkaban and there I knew you'd always come to my rescue, and I fell in love with you after you fought at Durmstrang to free me." She seemed happy as she spoke, humming as she was a nice soft tune. "I tried to confess my feelings, but I was just so embarrassed at first." She blushed as she nuzzled her face against his shoulder. "Now I'm just happy. It's a wonderful feeling to be in love isn't it?"

She beamed him a smile, and he smiled back nervously.

To her, it probably looked as if he was just being shy, because she whispered in a sultry voice a few seconds later.

"Don't be embarrassed. We're boyfriend and girlfriend now! My father would..." Her tone suddenly turned serious, before reducing itself to a whisper. "He'd say something about his baby girl being too young to fall in love." Hermione closed her eyes for a moment, a heavy weight clearly lodged on her throat, "and mum would tell him to let it go, that I'm trustworthy and that I wouldn't choose a bad boyfriend and—"

He remained quiet, his eyes filled with concern. Finally he couldn't keep the tense silence any longer and moved on his own accord forward. He gently kissed her on the forehead, and then on her lips. Holding her chin with his right hand, he whispered to her kindly.

"I promised I would keep you safe," he looked straight into her eyes then, and he saw.

He felt her trust for him, felt her emotions roll off like thick waves that crashed against the coastline, felt her heart start beating faster as

indescribable joy poured out of every pore of her skin as she just looked at him back with a blissful face. She felt safe. He could feel it practically ooze out from her, and he knew, he just knew, that he committed the most despicable act ever.

It was an act worthy of King, an act born of cowardice and fear of breaking the fragile girl in front of him. Yet nothing mattered except to see one of his few trusted friends happy and safe, and he'd gladly do this again, because it showed that he was not a monster. It showed that he could understand the desires of others and that he was not an arrogant tyrant who thought only of himself.

The Hogsmeade visit finished with the two of them smiling to one another, as they headed back into the castle.

The next day, he met with his dance instructor.

The day afterwards, Hermione learned how to curse people.

Cornelius Fudge

Undersecretary Umbridge was a disgusting creature. The fakeness of her genealogical tree was so easy to discern it made him retch: and the woman had been a Slytherin? He felt his stomach twist in curls and knots at the sight of her smiling at him, demanding his attention for yet another suggestion concerning werewolves' matters.

Werewolves and Giants, Hags and Mudbloods...why did he have to deal with this? He was the Prime Minister of Magical Britain. He'd suggest a budget cut on the Auror program, reduce the training years from five to three and use the money to hire more people to do the paperwork job. Although he supposed that a well-placed Incendio could solve the problem...

He signed with his wand the permission slip to delegate to the Umbridge woman the matter, and then smiled and bid the old hag farewell as she left. He smiled and shook his head gently, pocketing his ebony wand. He leaned back against the chair, his gaze settling on his wide and spacious office. He was minister of magic, and frankly the seat was overestimated.

He couldn't pass bills without the Wizengamot. The Wizengamot couldn't approve bills without him signing them, and then they had to

be rechecked by the Wizengamot once more, afterwards they would go to the respective head of department, which would sign them and control them.

And instead of being over there and then, it would be sent back to the Wizengamot, then to the Minister, and then back for the final vote. Considering the Wizengamot had to possess the full entirety of its living members to vote, or representatives for the unable, it meant that once a week was more than enough time to vote a single scrap of parchment through the cogs of the bureaucracy.

He fondly remembered the times where power and might were all that was needed. He remembered the good old times of trust and friendship. He felt himself mellow a bit, before he snarled and grasped back control. He didn't need stupid emotions to meddle with his thoughts.

He was Salazar Slytherin, greatest of the Hogwarts four. He had spat upon death for centuries, and he would do so again and again.

He just needed the wand, the cloak or the gem now. One of the three hallows would open the door of the clock tower, and since the tests were designated to be passed by the usage of any of the three in equal amount...

There was a knock at the door, and he rolled his eyes as he muttered.

"Come in."

One of the newest recruits, a certain Nymphadora Tonks, walked in with a sort of saucy smile on her face. She winked at him and sultrily whispered.

"Guess who was assigned as your personal escort, minister?"

"Why, I would very much like to know that." He replied with a smile of his own.

Amortentia.

The crown jewel of Godric, the perfect invention of Rowena, filtered love and lust that would make even the most horrendous hag a

princess in the eyes of the most prideful of suitors. The whimsical philosophers and romanticists had been right on one account: love was a powerful force.

Love made people blind of betrayals committed against them.

Love made people stupid, eager to please and defend their loved ones.

Love made people commit mistakes and clouded judgment.

Love, in the end, was the source of all woes.

He hadn't chosen Nymphadora because she was pretty, or a Metamorphmagus. He had chosen her because she was of the Black, because Sirius Black was going to suffer an unfortunate accident, and because little did she know that she was holding something extremely important within her own blood.

Something he was going to need, something for which he had forced the first of the Blacks to coin the term Toujour Purs. He couldn't risk the blood being too much diluted after all, not if it was needed for her.

She was going to have a field day, when she realized just how he would go about freeing her.

Lillian Potter

Her brother was dancing. He was as good as a wooden and rusty mannequin, but the other girl didn't seem to complain. The seventh year woman was sporting a bright and charming smile, and seemed to be wearing some sort of sleeveless tight-fitting robe that showed her ample curves right in the nose of Harry. Her brother was of course not interested.

The dancing room was wide and spacious, one side giving out on the gardens of the school while the floor was a wonderful mosaic of colors. There was a mirror on the wall opposite the entrance, and she could both see Harry and the girl dance as well as their reflections. She also could see the dangerous glint in Hermione's eyes, sitting next to her and apparently spouting foul and ancient

curses, while repeatedly clenching and unclenching her hands on the cover of a book.

The fact she hadn't as much as turned a page, or even turned the book the correct way to read it, clearly meant she was doing anything but reading. She probably was cursing the woman, who stopped midway of a turn and excused herself for the day.

"It's the third time she does that." Harry pointed out, walking closer to the two of them. "How am I going to learn how to dance, if she just has to leave halfway?" His tone was light, as if he was sharing some sort of secret joke.

"Oh?" Hermione smiled to him sweetly, having probably understood what the joke was. Lillian on the other hand looked at the two with a curious gaze. "You could practice with me." The brown haired girl pointed out, "We are going together to the ball after all."

"You don't mind me stepping on your toes?"

"Never."

As the two began to dance, Lillian watched them with morbid curiosity. The music was a slow one, and as she watched her brother and Hermione dance she couldn't help but feel a slight bit of jealousy. She would be going to the ball after all, but she had to go with Neville of all people. Why she actually needed someone to accompany her was a mystery. Especially why it had to be Neville of all people...

Their parents had been friends: her father had been a colleague of Neville's father before their stay in the St. Mungos ward, and she knew that while the Longbottom heir didn't see eye to eye with Harry, Augusta Longbottom and her mother were instead as thick as thieves. Harry returning to his family had been a political maneuver of both Dumbledore and Augusta, after all.

As she watched him dance however, something seemed amiss. Hermione was smiling, but Harry's own smile... it looked forced. The music of the violins covered the noise of their steps on the dance floor, the stiffness slowly morphing to gentle grace, and yet something was wrong. She could feel it. Hermione had changed over the course of the years, and Harry had too.

She had tried to change too, but she had failed. She was still the scrawny Quidditch lover she had been in youth; she still believed that Ron would eventually come around. She still believed somehow in Dumbledore and her parents. That was another topic that Harry had yet to touch. Why didn't he trust the Headmaster? The next few minutes, she frowned.

Hermione was whispering something to Harry's ear, and the boy was nodding thoughtfully with his eyes. She bit her lips as she saw the brown haired girl smile and kiss her brother, before slowly departing from it like a love struck teen. Which Hermione was, but which she had never thought she'd show as a side of her.

"Lillian, if the—" Hermione stilled and rolled her eyes, "The girl comes back, tell her I've brought my boyfriend into a broom closet. She'll understand."

She blushed at that. Harry nervously gulped. Then the two left, and she remained behind. In the now silent classroom, nobody was there to dance with her.

Nothing more than scattered remains.

She didn't know how long she simply remained there, watching her reflection in the mirror with a bit of apathy. She knew that, at a certain point, the music started again, softly and gently, and she turned around in surprise to look at a boy. The boy had dark hair and deep dark brown eyes. He was wearing the Hufflepuff tie and seemed to be hesitant.

"Do you want to dance?" He asked, "You do look like you'd like a dance." He added hastily, taking a few steps forward.

"Oh, I—" she blushed, the boy wasn't bad looking and it was just a dance after all, wasn't it?

She had never danced with a boy before.

It might prove to be something good, and it could help get her mind out of the gutter, and especially away from Harry's situation.

So she nodded to the Hufflepuff boy, and as the music went and the two began to dance, she didn't realize that the reflection on the wall gave away a red eyed boy in Slytherin garbs.

And the music went on...

Draco Malfoy

The Chamber of Secrets was silent. The water that surrounded the stone bridge stood still, as the snake faces alongside the walls had their eyes seemingly moving, to watch the few students who walked within. In the center of the stone bridge, Harry Potter stood with a sword held tightly with both his hands by the hilt. Hermione stood next to him, her wand ready.

He had thought the Chamber to hold something cooler, than a mere stone bridge and water, but at the moment he couldn't care. Next to him Ginny was looking forward with a sense of anxiousness. He couldn't fault her. He was scared too. There was just an air of different in the way Harry seemed to be. It didn't look like the boy who had swayed him with his Propaganda talk or the one who had spoken of burning down the ministry in front of the statue of the architect.

It was more collected. Calmer, more poised. The sword within his hands eerily glinted in the dim green light.

"Draco Malfoy," his name pronounced by his King came through the room like an arrow. "Step forward." He obeyed.

He walked quietly, his steps echoing through the stone walls and bouncing off, reverberating until he stopped straight in front of Harry. Those dark green eyes of his looked at him straightly, his piercing gaze somehow plucking through his entire soul as if searching for something.

He apparently found it, because he smiled and nodded to Hermione. The girl was curt in her speech however, and held none of the warmth that Harry's smile instead had.

"Draco of House Malfoy, of Noble Blood of Malfoy, son of Narcissa of House Malfoy, of Noble Blood of Black, and of Lucius of House

Malfoy, of Noble blood of Malfoy." The girl took a small breath. "Kneel and answer thus: do you swear undying fealty to thee king?"

He looked back at Harry, expecting to see some sort of kindling of understanding or of explanation. He stared into a face that was morphed into stone, the lineament hard and the jaw settled. There was nothing but silence now. He acknowledged the moment. He understood that this instant was long time in the coming. The inner circle theory had been taken into account, and he had been chosen to be if not the first, at least the second.

He kneeled like his father had done to the Dark Lord.

"I swear upon my blood, I swear upon my honor and my life, I swear upon all that I possess and that I control: forever loyal I will remain, for as long as the King rules."

"Draco Malfoy," Harry spoke then, his sword moving through the air with grace unparalleled. "By the power entrusted to me by the rights of my blood and magic, I create thee Knight of the King. Be thou fierce, fearless and loyal." The sword's side came down gently on his shoulders, and as it did he could feel something stir and move within its blade. Something old and ancient that beckoned answer.

"So mote it be." He replied.

He saw Hermione's wand move forward, pointed at him. He saw her take a single step forward, pressing the tip of her wand against his left shoulder, and then whisper a single word.

"Cnifendre."

His shoulder burned. He hissed as the fire spread through his left side, and as he clutched the tender area he felt tears stinging his eyes. He shuddered as an unearthly cold soon followed the hot pain. Slowly the sensations abated, leaving place to a mere itch.

"Then rise, Knight Malfoy." Harry whispered with the warmth back in his voice. "Rise, my brother in arms." And from the waters of the Chamber of Secrets something rose together with Draco's own body. Hermione tensed if slightly, before moving quickly to fetch the item that the castle had offered of its own accord.

Harry turned a curious gaze, before softly smiling. "It seems the castle agrees with your pledge."

He turned in that moment, his mouth open as if to ask what it was. There was a white hilted sword being lifted out of the water by an invisible watery hand, similar to how the lady of the lake had done the same with Excalibur. He had seen the sword once, in the Room of Requirements next to Arthur's shield. The sword held a name worthy of it, and after all had been a sister to Arthur's Excalibur.

"Carnwennan." He heard Harry whisper. "Do you know, Draco, of the sword's history?"

He didn't speak, too awed by the sword gently floating forward pushed by whatever magic held it in mid-air.

"Its name in English should be White Hilt. It is a dagger, albeit its length would classify it as a short sword. Touch it, it is yours now."

And Draco did just that.

"It also shrouds its user in the darkness of the nearby shadows." Harry whispered, no— his King whispered. He could feel it, the dim lights of the room moving to ignore him, the shadows hissing their words of darkness and engulfing him. He felt the cold, the creeping lack of warmth as he felt his entire body engulfed by a freezing jet of air.

Suddenly, he was gasping for air, the dagger fallen on the ground as he felt the sweat on his forehead slowly start to melt from its icy composition.

"If it works like Excalibur...unite it with your wand, Draco." His King whispered, and he obeyed.

Ginevra Weasley

She knew why she was there. She was going to be next. In that precise moment, something inside of her made her click: she shouldn't be there. They had probably considered her honorable enough, but in the end she hadn't followed because of some sort of loyalty. She had followed because it would keep her safe doing so,

but she wasn't all heartedly keen on being together with them. She wanted to be shielded, not to be the shield.

It was the cunning thing to do: why bother and help people who didn't want to be helped? She had stuck with Draco because of his family's connection and riches, and her acts had truly bought herself a better family, first hand clothes and much more. Now she was standing in a slightly cold underground room, with water dripping around and snake statues looking at her. Harry Potter seemed to be in his best crazy-fanatic style while Hermione was standing next to him, short of like Bellatrix Lestrange had been with Voldemort.

She watched as Draco brought his wand close to the sword with the white hilt and widened her eyes when the weapon disappeared, leaving behind only a small white glint on the wand's surface. Was that how Harry's wand worked too? Was Harry's sword actually his wand?

"Ginevra Weasley." Harry intoned calmly, "Come forward."

In that moment, she understood the level of loyalty that was asked of her. It wasn't the loyalty of a mere club. It wasn't the loyalty of fickle dreams of change or revolution. It wasn't something like joining the Quidditch team or simply displaying support from the shadows. What they asked of her was loyalty beyond anything else. She realized it then, as Draco's eyes settled puzzled on her, that she didn't want to.

She really didn't want to be chained by ideals that weren't really hers.

"I...I don't..." She whispered, slowly shaking her head. "I'll keep it a secret! I swear I will, but I can't." She wasn't strong enough, and she knew that. She'd crack. She'd break under such a pressure. She wasn't really intent on being a part of a rebel group to overthrow the ministry. This was beyond being sane of mind. This was outright foolish and there was just no way she'd...

"I understand." Harry nodded. Draco's eyes seemed to look perplexed at Harry's, as the boy's sword morphed back into a wand.

She blinked at that. It was that simple? She sighed in relief, her shoulders slumping. What did she expect, that somehow she'd end up being killed or—

"Obliviate."

And she knew no more.

Harry Potter

His wand had done the deed. This had been his side of the deal. Hermione had created the charm, taking together the ideas of the protean charm with the morsmordre spell of Voldemort. On Draco's shoulder was now a sword with the symbol of Hogwarts etched upon it, the words of the school forever marked on his skin. It would sting when he would call him, it would warn him when his mind was about to be breached, it would...

It would kill him, if he tried to betray his oath.

He trusted Draco. He did. With everything that he had seen and felt on his skin however, how could he blindly trust anyone again? Salazar had been betrayed too many times to be counted. The world of the past seemed filled with treacheries and backstabbing, lies and deceptions bountifully filled it up to dish out the murkiest of past's renditions. There just wasn't a single truth or a single lie.

He had to do what he had to do.

The Obliviate spell was his to use now. Was this how Albus felt, the first time he had used one? 'For the Greater Good' continuously chanted at his lips? The glazed eyes of Ginny looked at him, before Hermione followed with a stupefy spell.

"Draco: she won't remember any of this." He began quietly, seeing the look of surprise on his first knight. "Bring her back to the dorms: tell she was jinxed by a masked Gryffindor." He added quickly. "Take heed however: do not trust her with any secrets of the inner circle —no, the round table—"

"The tattoo on your arm is skin colored, Malfoy." Hermione spoke next. "It should turn slightly darker when you're being called. It should sting if someone attempts Legilimency on you. It will also latch on the nearest tattoo and give a slight pull in their direction." She added quietly. "In this way polyjuiced spies won't be able to

make their way to our meetings and if we are lost in darkness we can at least find one another."

His eyebrows rose at those words. He had underestimated Hermione's grasp of charms, or probably her sheer resolve and her working schedule. She did have bags under her eyes that showed her lack of sleep, but she hadn't thought she would dedicate even the sleeping hours to something like this. She could have taken her time, it wasn't as if they were on a time constraint: he had all the time he needed.

"Harry?" Draco whispered back, "What did I just agree to?"

"Revolution, my friend." He replied calmly. "And for our cause, sacrifices must be made." His eyes lingered for a moment on Ginny's stupefied body, before returning to gaze on the pale blond haired boy. "I'll be expanding the Round Table in the days to come. I thought Ginny shared our ideals, but apparently she didn't have the resolve to go through them." He shook his head lightly, "It doesn't matter. Bring her back in the dorms and use Enervate to wake her up. Tell her the meeting was postponed."

"Harry—"

"Now, Draco." He hissed then to one of the snake statues, whose fangs opened up to reveal the passage that would lead the boy near the Slytherin common rooms. "Once I finish building up the round table, I will summon you all. Until then lay low and remember: all of this did not happen."

He then nudged towards Hermione, who nodded back and handed over a book to the blond boy.

"That's a book on Occlumency. Study it. Learn to close your mind and keep your gaze always low or away from Dumbledore, Snape," Draco was about to retort, but he snapped, "Yes! Even Snape is not to be trusted Draco! This isn't some sort of thing where you can just trust anyone that says he believes in us. Welcome to the world of adults, Draco." Hope you enjoy your stay. He thought without saying.

"All right." The Malfoy heir relented, before holding Ginny with one arm circling the girl's frame and the book with the free hand. "See you later, Harry?"

"See you later." He replied.

As he watched the boy go, he couldn't help but feel slightly anxious. He had just branded Draco, as if he was nothing more than cattle, just like he had branded Hermione. He felt more and more like the Dark Lord, than some sort of revolutionary. Then again even the Dark Lord was a revolutionary, wasn't he? All dictators had to do something to please the population; it was the conundrum of the world: strange as it was, dictators were the prime example of democracy.

Dictatorships fell when the people stopped believing in them, and the military itself crumbled when it had to fire at its own families. At the moment, some people believed in him and not Dumbledore. By branding them he ensured they would follow him or die, but this just made him feel a little less clean about it.

He was basically acquiring followers who would be pawns to him.

Even as Hermione smiled provocatively at him, since they were now alone in the chambers of secrets, and was gently circling her index against his cheek with a cute pout, he felt sort of cold inside. He was acting like King. He knew this was his own free will: he didn't have a choice. This had to be done.

Hermione grew tired of him lost in thought, since she kissed him again, before whispering.

"Harry James Potter: what's the matter?"

"Is this the right thing?" His hand clutched his wand. "Oblivate those who don't comply, brand the rest?"

"Oh Harry," Hermione hugged him gently. "we brand them after they've made their loyalties clear. If they truly believe their oaths the brand is just something more. If they're liars then you would feel it and there would be no need for a branding: you'd just Oblivate them and know they're not to be trusted. It's perfect. It's simple and it has nothing wrong in it."

"Dumbledore obliviated me repeatedly." He muttered. Hermione's hug on him tightened afterwards. "He knew I was alive since birth.

He knew I was with my parents. He knew they loved me and he killed them. He knew all of this and he still smiled at me and twinkled his damn eyes like a grandfather...AND PEOPLE BELIEVE HIM STILL!" He basically screamed in the empty chamber, the noise reverberating as his words echoed. The frustration bottled within him erupted like water no longer held by a dam.

"He's a manipulative bastard, a backstabber and a betrayer. He's the reason Voldemort found me and my sister, he's the reason I have to do this even if I don't want to! And I can't stand this, Hermione! I can't stand becoming a monster just to face him! Where is the light in all of this, Hermione!? Where is justice? Where is the good?"

Hermione didn't answer. She merely encircled his head with her arms and held his face pressed against her robes as he caught his breath.

"Harry, my Kn—King, my savior and my hero...my love." She whispered tenderly, "It's all right. You are not Dumbledore. You are not evil. You are forced, but that doesn't make you evil. The Ministry is evil. Dumbledore is evil. Snape is evil. Everyone who isn't on our side is evil...and you're not evil, Harry." She cooed, "You can't be." She added with a final note of certainty.

He sighed and relaxed in the hug.

I can teach you that fire is hot, but what you do with that knowledge...that is up to you.

I am the King of Hogwarts! The ruler of Azkaban! The wielder of Excalibur! I am your executioner!

I'm someone who doesn't give a damn about names! I AM ME!

Would you kill your parents for power?

He shuddered and recoiled, as if visibly struck by something that seemed to be going on somewhere nearby. He fell down on the ground hard, his teeth gritting as spasms and tremors quaked his body. He felt a deep feeling of cold and wrongness etching itself around him, as if some sort of force was trying to...

And then it was gone.

He gasped as the splinters of memories of the past sailed through him. He shook his head, trying to remove the small flashbacks he had felt wreck themselves against his brain.

"Harry!?" Hermione exclaimed, visibly scared as she moved closer to him, grasping his face with her hands to look at him. "Are you all right? You're hurt? We should go to the infirmary. You don't look good. Madam Pomfrey might—right! That bitch works for Dumbledore I suppose. Your mother's back but we can't trust her! I'll have to study healing and diagnostic charms then, only way..." as Hermione murmured to herself, her hazel eyes drilling into his as she checked him for a fever, he suddenly saw something else.

"Are you sure?" A tired voice rang through the dark tent. "She really did?"

"Yes, my King." Draco looked so old there. With half his face hidden with a silver mask. "I followed her personally. I swear it's the truth: I will die should I lie to you."

"I see." The voice muttered again. "If she betrayed me, than her fate is certain: kill her."

"Yes, my King." Future-Draco acknowledged the voice's words, and then turned to leave. He watched him go with a mixture of wonder and surprise. Was this a vision of some sorts?

Suddenly the vision faded and he groaned.

"You are most definitively sick!" Hermione hissed. "I don't trust madam Pomfrey. We'll go and see if your mother is there: if she isn't then I'll just have to nurse you back to health somehow and—"

"Hermione. I'm having visions." He replied hotly, stopping the girl's rant midway. "I...I think I saw future-Draco."

"Harry, you can't have visions. Divination is utter bollocks." The brown haired girl retorted. "And it should be a seer's thing that runs in the blood."

"Then how do you—"

In that moment, a squit resounded through the Chamber of Secrets.

Future-Harry

"I have to solve an itsy bitsy problem." He muttered. His eyes scanned around the desolated ensemble of Hogwarts' forbidden forest. "An itsy bitsy problem called meddling woman." He added, his eyes gleaming. "And I think you can help me for an itsy bitsy price called 'I'll get to live another day', don't you like it?" He whispered conspiratorially.

The Acromantulas nervously clicked their fangs together, as understanding ran through their nests.

"Good spiders! I won't have to feed you to my snake then!" Future-Harry smiled even more.

"Let's go Heather." He hissed in parseltongue. "No time to dally around."

"Master? Are you sure you don't want me to wear my ear-muffs?"

"Of course not. How can I give you orders otherwise?"

"Oh...All right master."

Author's notes

Did anyone ever play Prince of Persia, the Warrior Within? The one with the big bad sand monster (Dahaka) who runs after the Prince because he has dodged death too many times and comes to collect?

There is an item there, the Mask of Wraith whose ability is actually what drives this story. (Not the mask itself, but the ability it has: two versions can coexist within the past at the same time, implying that otherwise it is not possible.)

At the moment, there are various present-past-future Harry going around. I feel the need to explain once more, in order to give everyone a clearer view of it.

'Linear Time Harry' is Present-Self in Present-Time.

There is a Future-possessed by Peeves-Harry now in Present-Time.

There is a Future-Harry who is killed by his Present-Self in Past-Time.

There is a Present-Self in Present-Time branding his followers.

There is a Present-Self in Past-Time tomb raiding around the globe.

Which means that:

Present-Self in Past-Time— tomb raids with present-hat—goes back in time and changes hats (swaps present hat with past hat who has trouble remembering stuff) — delivers Hat to present-self—does something-something—ends up as future-self—travels back in time to kill Linear Time Harry.

Repeat above, and replace something-something with —kills future-self (but is without hat)—dies with future-self.

The 'vision' is merely a sort of Dahaka loaned effect. (In warrior within, the screen turns to grey when the Dahaka is close. Here the closeness effectively makes snippets of the future/past be seen)

With this chapter, I will reach 200000 views/hits. The story is currently in 15 communities, has achieved 664 reviews and is nicely going for 500000 words, there are 291 favorites (Whom I thank, thank you guys for having favorited the story!) 329 followers (who would probably eat me alive, were I to even hint at not completing the story) and all in all I hope that with each chapter I 'stave off' boredom for you readers for at least a few minutes. (Maybe half an hour is too much, five minutes/ten?) and this would be the 84th chapter.

And a special call-out on Vikraal, who is not only an awesome reviewer and 'pointing out things that might hold second meanings' but is also working on making a better cover for this story than what an automated logo producer can do. So thanks!

Special thanks also to all the reviewers and to Project Team Beta (who is now reviewing chapter 3 of this story).

Special thanks of course also to all those who have favorited the story.

Harry Wylt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter 10

The dining hall at breakfast was unexpectedly gloomy. The Gryffindors seemed to have been somewhat placated, with the date of his Order of Merlin coming up they had probably decided not to make a fuss, or maybe they just wanted to wait and see if the ministry really gave him a medal. Since the Prime Minister seemed keen on doing just that, even the most headstrong of the house of the brave was starting to doubt the voices that claimed him a Dark Lord. The irony of the present year with the past one was actually only then sinking in Harry.

The year prior, he had been accused of being a Dark Lord while innocent. This year he was being hailed as a Hero while he was becoming, sort of, a Dark Lord in secret. As he began to eat, his eyes wandered over the Slytherin table, where Draco was sitting stiffly and quietly. Next to him Vincent was watching with a perplexed stare his 'boss' who seemed to be giving side glances at Ginny. The young girl was instead with her gaze slightly glazed, and for a moment something tightened within Harry's stomach.

He just hoped he had memory charmed her correctly. The 'destroying' of memories was easier to do than the modifying of them and the Obliviate spell was just that: a giant and magical sledgehammer whose only purpose was destruction. The girl would be fine, if a bit disconnected from the world for a few days. Strangely that behavior somehow seemed to relate to the blond haired Ravenclaw who was sitting next to him.

Luna was apparently a day-dreamer, but she did have something strange going on around her. Her words seemed meaningless, but they did hold a meaning if one looked at them correctly. The girl had sat down next to him, glared at him as if he had committed some sort of atrocity, and then had begun to eat without saying a word.

"Luna?" He asked in a quiet murmur. "Are you angry?"

Hermione keenly faked disinterest, but her ears perked up as she slowly stopped eating, to listen on. He knew the girl next to him wouldn't speak to Luna for some reason, but if he could try and understand what had them both angry at one another, maybe he

could fix it. He had little friends at Hogwarts. He didn't like two of them fighting each other.

"No mister Nargle." Luna retorted hotly. "I am not angry at you, why would I be angry at a Nargle?" There wasn't the usual 'Luna' tone in her voice, rather it was actually the tone of an enraged or at least thoroughly pissed off girl.

"What's going on then?" He asked again, wincing at the tone used.

"I realized I was meant to do something, and then I never had to do it." The girl mumbled, "Nargles can't do that now, can they? I mean it would be dreadful if they could!" She actually seemed to be pondering on that, her eyes widening in some sort of revelation for a split second. "Think about it: if the Nargles could make other people not do things they had to do, then there would be no way to find them because all they'd have to do would be stop other people from doing things to find them!"

"I think I lost you, Luna."

"Oh silly you, I'm right here." The girl replied, rolling her silvery grey eyes. "You know, you're going to be the death of me." She added somberly. "Or at least, a Nargle like you."

He tensed.

"What?" He whispered.

"I said it out loud?" She looked flustered. Suddenly, she began to shake her head. "No, bad thing to do. Shouldn't have done that. Nothing's going to happen. Stupid me for saying something impossible. Must be the Nargles: they must be in my hair. I'll cut it short then—"

"Luna." He hissed. "What is this about me being your death?" He furiously locked eyes with the girl.

"It doesn't matter. You're not really a Nargle, I'm sorry I said that." Her tone was now condescending, as if she was gently laying off a delicate argument a child. "You're a really good friend. I'm glad I have you as one."

"Luna, please. This is going to drive me mad. If you know something, tell me."

"One is one." She whispered with a wink. "Two is two. One cannot be two. Yet three and four can be together, if one more comes back from six."

"That is not an answer." He murmured.

"And you asked not a question." She replied calmly. He spun around angrily, his left hand already forming into a slap, when he stilled, his arm frozen in mid-air. The girl was looking at him with fright and wide eyes. Her skin pale in fear.

Harry dropped his arm lifelessly, suddenly feeling extremely guilty. "I'm sorry."

"It's all right." She murmured, quickly moving to stand up.

"Luna, I didn't—"

"I have to go. The Nargles are really dreadful around here now." She spoke with fear in her tone, and that, instead of anger or hate or resentment or any other emotion of the human spectrum was what truly made Harry feel bad. He brought his hands to cover his face, as the bench creaked slightly when Hermione moved closer to him.

"Harry?" She asked softly.

"I'm fine." He whispered back.

"Did Luna do something Looney to you?" Hermione's question was filled with bitter anger, he could feel that and he knew he should chide the brown haired girl next to him...but he couldn't. Luna had done something Looney to him, but he had done something worse: he had done something Kingly to her. He had stupidly believed himself above everyone else, who so easily could be prey to their passions and quick to anger. He wasn't superior to everyone else. He was like everyone else. He could get angry. He could feel sad. He could tire. He could be wounded. He could wound.

Just like he had done with Luna. Not a physical wound, but he knew he had broken something with the scrawny girl who seemed to be in

a constant childish innocence. He blinked. Luna was dreamy. She seemed lost in thought. She seemed...

The sudden lurch in his soul told him he had been right, and tears began to prick his eyes.

"Harry?" Hermione asked worriedly. "What is wrong?"

"Luna." He whispered back. "She...Hermione," he turned to look at her, "I think she is memory charmed and Obliviated regularly."

Hermione frowned. "Harry? Somebody would have noticed by now."

"No." He shook his head. "Not if it's him."

To that, Hermione did not answer immediately. She needed a bit more to understand, he knew that. He knew he was probably over-reacting. He knew he was going to be ashamed of even having thought about it, but what else could it be!? Was the girl autistic? No! Was she mentally impaired? No! One thing was to believe the supernatural, one thing was to believe in fantastic creatures and what-not...but the glazed eyes, the dreamy gaze as if she didn't know where she was...

That all pointed down to a single thing.

"Harry, I know Dumbledore is..." She bit her lip, "But even he wouldn't be that..."

"Who else, Hermione?" He replied. "Who else would taunt me by forcing the girl to tell me I'd be her death? This is Dumbledore, Hermione. He's taunting me, reminding me I have to play his tune or he will strike me where it hurt. He got you. He got Luna. He'll get Draco and Ginny next. It's revenge. I know it. I feel it." He quickly used the robe's sleeve to wipe away the tears. "I can't cry, can't show him he got me. Hermione please, I need you to be careful. I don't know what he would do to you...I wouldn't..." His words trailed off as he saw the girl turning teary eyed and nodding in silence, before lunging to hug him tightly once.

It was early morning and so the spectacle hadn't been all that public, but as he was about to leave, the owls flew in with their post. The

Gringott letter arrived brought by a majestic brown feathered owl, which dropped it in front of him before turning around and leaving.

He stood up, moving out of the dining hall and in the hallway, before opening the letter up and starting to read it. He winced as he felt the paper cut through his index finger, a drop of blood falling down as the gibberish turned to English.

I expect you seven hours ago in Hogsmeade, at the Hogshead. Be stealthy. Be Hallow. Be Duke.

Ps: the message will incinerate itself after being read: let it go.

He yelped as the paper actually burned all in a single flash of light, turning to cinders and ashes that flew away carried by the gentle breeze.

"Seven hours ago?" Hermione whispered, having read from his shoulder the message. "Harry? How can you be expected seven hours ago?"

"Not here." He whispered, quickly grabbing Hermione and guiding her to the nearest broom closet. He closed it behind him, before taking out the Time-Turner.

"Time is not linear." He commented. "It's more like a pretzel shaped chaos tightly controlled by the laws of perspective, selective ignorance and sheer dumb luck...at least, that's how I see it."

He unclasped the invisible cloak, letting the deathly hallow of the Invisibility cloak cover him and Hermione, who gasped and whispered back angrily.

"Harry, you're not making any—" As he finished giving the Time-Turner seven spins, he grabbed with his other hand onto Hermione. He wondered in what side of the castle they would end up. Seven hours earlier would have been midnight...which meant the Chamber of Secrets.

And that meant his meeting with Pettigrew.

Peter Pettigrew

Maybe he shouldn't have squeaked. As he lay immobilized and floating in the air, he began to revisit his life as in a flashback. He had always been timid as a child. A bit on the fat side, not really much of a sport person. He had always skived from fights. He had never been one for bravery, and his father had died with him young. It had been him and his mother for as long as he remembered. His mother was a smart witch, but those were dreadful times and to scrape off enough to send him to Hogwarts they had made many sacrifices.

He had survived though. He had been a scavenger in his youth, bits and pieces of broken metal could be easily melted together with a charm, and broken stuff could be repaired and then sold off again. The only time he had been praised by a teacher had been with his charm professor, and the 'reparo' spell. He had never swooped low however, and he had never stolen from others. The hat had debated Hufflepuff with him, but Gryffindor was where Black and Lupin had gone, and he knew Potter would follow.

It had been lady luck herself, he believed, to have gifted him those friends. He had survived, and the tuition had come easier to be paid, with him spending time at Hogwarts during vacations or at the Potter manor together with James, Sirius and Lupin. In seventh year, Lily had joined their group and had become the voice of reason with James, and then the two had married.

Voldemort hadn't kept still however.

The man had risen, and the Headmaster of Hogwarts had enrolled them in the Order of the Phoenix, to battle the rising Dark Lord. He had answered the call. He had foolishly answered the call of a man he trusted. The order needed a spy, and he was chosen. Dumbledore had first thought of Sirius, but the Black had always been deeply attached to James and the Dark Lord wouldn't have trusted him to betray.

In the end it had hurt, to be chosen because he was the least 'friend' of the lot.

But he had done his part.

He had obeyed, and pledged loyalty to the Dark Lord.

Voldemort forced him to kill his own mother in cold blood with the Avada Kedavra curse. 'Death Eaters' killed her, was what he told the sad James and Sirius who came to console him. He went to the funerals of the Order members who died because of his words. The Prewitt twins, both smiling men who had sweethearts to marry at the end of the war, both dead because Dumbledore ordered him to tell Voldemort of their houses.

Alastor's leg and eye, both taken away because he had told the Dark Lord of the man's favorite spells to use in battle. The Longbottom had gone close, really close to death thrice, and so had the Potters, and he had always been the spy. Then it happened.

Dumbledore knew Voldemort wouldn't trust him with nothing, so he had to wait. He had to wait until the moment where the Dark Lord began to look for the Potters and the Longbottom, both under Fidelius.

And James and Lily had chosen him.

Because he was the most improbable one. Because he was the less likely to be considered. Because he was the lesser 'friend'. It had hurt more than being chosen as a spy for Dumbledore. It had hurt so much he actually felt nothing in revealing the location to the Dark Lord.

Chosen because he was nothing more than the 'last of friends'...no matter how sweetly they covered it with him 'doing the right and brave thing' or being a 'marauder' the same as them...he was Peter Pettigrew, the last wheel of the chariot, the limping horse, the 'lesser friend'.

And instead of being honored for his spy work, instead of at least being forgiven for his crimes...Dumbledore threw him in Azkaban, to be kissed.

In that moment, he had snapped. He had screamed and tore apart the bindings on the executioner's chair while drawing blood, and then he had found the courage, the bravery of Gryffindor through sheer fear alone, to transform into a mouse and run.

He had escaped the execution, but not Azkaban. He had run around the island, eating and pilfering from the larder of the prison, nicking

food and sipping from the water barrels. He had done all of that and more, and he had survived.

Then he was contacted, offered a way out. How could he refuse? He still didn't know how the owl had found him, or how he had managed to steal the papers with the wards of the prison and make his way back to the flying animal in question. He only knew that in that moment, he had set in motion the plans to freedom.

Then he had ended up in Nurmengard.

From there Gellert had taken him back to Hogwarts and the memories grew confused. He didn't recall what he had done for the other Dark Lord. He didn't remember the period between Nurmengard and Hogwarts, as if a thick fog had blanketed it. He knew something had of course happened, but he didn't know what.

And now he stood floating, in his rat form, with a wand pointing at him a conjured flame that seemed blue in color.

"Peter Pettigrew, resume your human form." The boy in front of him commanded with a stern tone, his wand flicking as the word 'serpensortia' echoed through the chamber. Snakes of black scales, green scales, adders and cobras mixed with rattle-snakes all emerged from the tip of the wand, hissing and looking around with surprise.

The boy hissed back at them, and with that Peter knew he had gone from one Dark Lord to another. A Parselmouth didn't bode well.

He complied; more because he could at least die as a human than a rat, and as he did that he felt the spell trapping him relent to allow him movement. He landed on the ground softly, and looked with perplexity from Pettigrew's eyes went towards the snakes, who had slowly slithered their way into surrounding him. The look on the girl's face was contrite, as if she wanted to say something but couldn't, while the boy seemed to be coldly gazing at him with calculating eyes.

"Peter Pettigrew, traitor." Harry whispered as he winced at the appellative. "You are the prime responsible for what happened to me, are you not?" He added quietly. "I wonder: should I execute you?"

"Harry," Hermione's tone was pleading, something that Peter couldn't help but be intimately familiar with, having used it himself time and time again to get in the Dark Lord's good graces. "He's a victim like you."

"Oh?" The boy replied, and then his dark green eyes settled on his own. Peter felt the familiar push of Legilimency, and he widened his eyes in surprise. So young and already able to read through minds? He shuddered as he did his best to hide his thoughts on how to escape from there. He could reach for the stolen wand in his sleeve, but he'd have to face against the snakes surrounding him if he wanted to hope for some meager change.

"It won't help you," Harry whispered. "I don't know how you entered the Chamber." The boy stilled. "You were carried inside." Thoughtful now with his tone, the Ravenclaw turned to look at Hermione for a moment, before shaking his head slowly. "Peter Pettigrew." He commented, his wand morphing into that of a sword.

"Do thou swear loyalty to me, in blood, flesh and magic? Do you renounce your past allegations and orders?" As he intoned that, the rat animagus knew he would die.

"I can't." Tears began to flow down his face. "I swear I would if I could, I want revenge on him, but I can't. I can't betray the Order of the Phoenix. I can't speak to those who are not memb—"

And the sword flew in the air, right at where he stood.

Hermione's scream rang through the Chamber, as he closed his eyes awaiting death.

Albus Dumbledore

"The fire was intense, supreme mugwump." The French auror spoke with richly accented English, as they stood near the caves of the Lourdes. "Fiendfyre is the probable culprit, but see these marks here?" The man pointed at the ground, where long slashes seemed to have been formed. "We can't identify them. Seems like sword swings, but some of my colleagues believe it could be the signs of a Transfiguration of sorts having gone through."

"I see." He twirled his long white beard for a moment, before settling his icy blue eyes on the dark and collapsed tunnel in front of them. "Why hasn't it been opened yet?"

"Fiendfyre risks mostly." The auror replied. "We wouldn't want it to spread, what with all those believers coming around to hope for a miracle of sorts, can't risk the statute of secrecy."

"Well then, my boy." He smiled, "Do open it up: I'll take care of it." The auror nodded, and as the French policeman swished his wand at the crumpled tunnel, light began to shine through it.

The air finally reaching within the inner chambers, an explosion soon followed as the rocks and debris were scattered while scorching black flames erupted from the mouth of the cave. Albus was fast enough to bring him and the auror to safety, while the nearby French Wizards began to contain the fire.

The screams of Aguamenti soon followed, but the fire did not seem at all impressed, instead increasing in magnitude.

"Stop! Stop!" Dumbledore roared. "This is Graiusfyre! Water only enhances the flame! Smother it with earth to fight it off!" The old wizard soon flicked his wand, morphing the ground into strong dirt digits that began to strongly push the fire against the surface of the cave's floor. The other aurors mimicked his example with transfigured shovels made of stone, and eventually the tunnel's entrance was cleared.

"Graiusfyre?" The French auror queried cautiously. "Isn't that a prohibited dark spell?"

"It is." Dumbledore nodded gravely. "I fear what we may find through here. Be careful in whom you send through, Monsieur Delacour."

The man nodded quietly, his face slightly ashen as he probably was starting to ponder on whom to send on a highly risky mission like this. The caves behind the Lourdes, and especially through the crumbled tunnel, had never been explored before. To have such a powerful fire run its course, it was highly possible nothing remained within. If pockets of the fire remained though, it could prove highly dangerous and cause more explosions.

Albus grimly turned to look at the few wounded aurors, who were being healed by the group's medi-wizard. This *modus operandi* wasn't new to him. He had received a report from Kingsley that the forest of Brocéliande had received such a treatment too, with Fiendfyre of all the things. It had begun from the center and then moved towards the edges, sending magical beasts of various degrees of danger across the French's plains and forests. There had been many casualties, especially with the escaped Basilisks and poisonous snakes.

The few Nundus had forced the government of magical France to resort to requesting the immediate deployment of their army in battling the magic beasts, and even then some still remained lurking around the countryside.

The fall had been given to terrorist attacks, to keep the muggles safe in their houses.

It was strange how the forest had burned too. A lot of foolhardy adventurers had tried to master Fiendfyre while entering the forest, to burn a passage through. The wizards lost control of it as soon as it was cast, burning them to a crisp without even touching the forest itself. Somehow, someone had reached the center of Brocéliande and then turned around to burn it.

He could even empathize with whoever had done that: he too for the Greater Good had kept precious artifacts and treasures hidden from others, destroying the only ways to reach them. Yet as he saw the French aurors enter the narrow tunnel, blast apart the rubble and making their way through, he couldn't help but wonder who could do all of this.

Hadn't Harry been at Hogwarts, kept under a watchful gaze, he would have thought of him. However Duke Wyllt seemed a likely alternative. Was it possible he had misunderstood the prophecy? Wyllt was the old surname of Merlin after all. The man known as the most powerful of wizards had been acknowledged by the founders as an equal too, so there was the chance he had been wrong.

That the case, then was it still late to run interference?

Acknowledged by the founders' blood, the changer will rise to defeat the darkness that creeps to the house of the dragon, heir of he who

worshipped by all walks with the animals, he shall face his enemies atop the spires of time and space itself. Unbind by darkness, prophecy or light his choice shall mark the difference between redemption and revenge.

Maybe he didn't have to do anything. The darkness that crept into Hogwarts, for the house of the dragon could only be the school, was probably Harry. So Duke Wylt would solve that problem for him. The problem came from the other prophecy.

The lion will sorrow as Albion is conquered by the herald of change, while the Queen of the night will seduce the lord of deceit and the child will bring the twilight of a world and the sunrise of another...he will conquer the Darkness. Fire will fall and purify the world, as brimstone will crack and revenge will shine.

How could two prophecies both relate to destroy the darkness made little sense: if one came true, then the other was meant to be useless. Unless both referred to different types of darkness, but even then...

Albus shook his head slowly. He wondered why Voldemort had actually gone to Godric's Hollow that night. If he knew of the trap, then why go and face his death?

He closed his eyes, his memory returning to the events of that night.

Godric's Hollow – 31 of October

The Potters were in the house, he could hear Tom's harsh words as he ordered them to move. They refused, 'Not Harry, not Lillian. Not the children! Please take me but not them!' and he saw the flashes of light, bright red, from his hidden position within the Cloak of Invisibility that he had asked from James. Then there was silence.

He slowly crept into the house, and held his breath as he saw the stunned James standing in a corner of the living room. He took gentle and silent steps up the stairs, being thankful they did not creak. He neared the room of the children, where Tom Riddle was supposed to be standing. Yet Tom Riddle wasn't there. Neither was one of the two children.

He hadn't heard the sound of the Avada Kedavra. The Dark Lord had to have felt the anti-apparition wards go up, and had torn them down to leave. Tom had always been quick in his thinking and acting, but he hadn't expected him to be that fast.

He took a small breath. The trap had sprung and failed. His blue eyes settled on the remaining child, a girl with a tuft of red hair and hazel eyes, who was crying and moving her tiny hands against the bars, as if to call back her lost twin. He frowned at the sight of the still breathing Lily. He could understand Tom not killing James Potter: the man was a pureblood, and there was a sort of twisted sense...but Lily Potter was a muggleborn. Tom shouldn't have thought twice about killing her.

Instead he hadn't.

He was about to leave, when the door crept open again and Tom Riddle marched in again, wand in hand and a furious look. Albus was fast this time. The moment the man's wand went to attack the girl in the crib, his own spell flew and hit straight in the back the Dark Lord.

It hadn't even been a fight worthy of being mentioned. The Avada Kedavra curse had departed the tip of his wand with ease, the desire to see Tom Riddle dead far overwriting his normally gentle soul. This was for Ariana after all: a small sacrifice for the Greater Good.

He hadn't expected Tom Riddle's body to explode outwards. He hadn't expected molten shrapnel of metal to fly in the air with deadly speed. Barely had he managed a shield, but the sudden cry of pain brought his attention to Lillian, whose left hand was bleeding. Lily Potter had luckily been slumped on the ground, and held no wounds. A quick swish of the wand and every scorch mark was removed, the small fires dosed off.

Then he neared Lillian Potter, and with another flick gave her the scar that would herald her as the defeater of the Dark Lord. With this, he hoped that Tom Riddle would lose all of his power: what madmen would follow again someone who had lost to a child? He was sure Lily Potter would come up with an explanation of sorts. Maybe an ancient magic would be the solution, blood magic was more likely.

He smiled.

He popped a lemon drop in his mouth.

The Death Eaters would now concentrate on getting even with the Girl-Who-Lived...and he would have free reign for some of his most...shady deals.

Present-Harry in Past-Time

He held his breath as Peter Pettigrew swore loyalty to his past-self and was branded by Hermione's wand. Excalibur, the sword that cuts, could cut through shackles of any type and form. The sword could cut all. Oaths made on magic could be unbind, contracts signed with blood destroyed. There was nothing that could tie the sword down. The Dark Mark, that Peter Pettigrew had displayed was gone, tore apart by the sword's magic and now replaced with his own mark.

They had brought the man out afterwards, he remembered. He had hidden the Animagus and then brought him quietly to the edges of Hogwarts, using his invisibility cloak to do so. He and Present-Hermione had followed quietly, but instead of stopping near his past-self they had kept on moving, until they had finally been alone on the road to Hogsmeade.

"You have a Time-Turner." Hermione whispered under the cloak, holding tightly onto him to avoid ending outside its invisibility effect. "You have a Time-Turner and you didn't tell me." She added scathingly.

"You know what it is?" He asked back in a whisper.

"It's a highly regulated object of the ministry." She replied, "And you can't go back more than..." Her voice lowered to a whisper, "You went back seven hours!? That's impossible! Where did you get an unregistered Time-Turner!? Harry, it's dangerous! You can't—"

"Hermione. Quiet." He snapped back in a low hiss. "We're nearing Hogsmeade."

"Harry." The voice came out as a strangled cry, before it finally relented.

"Fine." Hermione huffed. "Don't listen to me. You'll see then." She muttered darkly. "And then you'll be sorry, and I'll be kind enough to tell you 'Harry, I told you it was dangerous, but did you listen to me?' and then I'll forgive you, and you'll have to buy me some sugar quills."

"I'll buy you a sugar desk, but now silence Hermione." He muttered as they trudged within the wizard village. There were loud barking sounds coming from the countryside, and as they entered the Hogshead a cold and unsettling wind blew behind their backs. The door closed with a sharp sound, and as the smoky atmosphere of the dingy pub came into view, Harry navigated with Hermione towards the far off corner. A few seconds later, and his eyes had found the only goblin patron of the entire establishment. He pointed him to Hermione, and the two slowly walked closer.

The goblin was wearing a long-sleeved robe with the symbol of Gringotts etched on it. The late time of the night made the few patrons drunken rants more than enough of a cover for their whispers to reach him.

"We're here." Harry whispered near the goblin, who tensed for a split second, before narrowing his eyes to where they stood invisible and nodding thoughtfully. The goblin stood up and wobbled upstairs, having probably taken a room.

They followed in silence, and as they were hastily gestured inside the door was closed behind them.

The Invisibility cloak was then lowered, and as it returned to only fit him, the goblin appeared to sneer at the sight of Hermione.

"Mister Potter...the meeting was supposed to be private."

The dingy room held a candle on a desk, a few letters hastily dropped on the bed and a dresser that every now and then rattled as if something within demanded to be let out. The only window stood slightly open, letting in the cool air of the night. A table stood with four chairs in the center of the room, a candlestick illuminating it.

The sound of barking coming from outside seemed to have diminished, but was still there. Somebody must have had a lot of dogs running wild in the countryside, to make such noises.

"I have no secrets for Hermione," he replied calmly. Except maybe the one about him dying in the future by the hands of his past-self. It was then that he realized that he hadn't told Hermione something else, but just as he was about to open his mouth, the goblin grumbled and commented.

"As you say, Duke Wyllt, we can now begin discussing why Gringotts wishes to help you. It will be a long story, so you will have to sit down and listen." As the goblin gestured for the seats, Harry felt the tell-tale gaze of an angry Hermione on the back of his head, but shook the fought of her strangling him out of his mind. She wouldn't go that far.

The goblin took a deep breath, before starting his tale.

"Our story begins in the year of the Founder Era, Duke Wyllt, and precisely with an event that shames us Goblin since that moment onwards."

Harry brought up an eyebrow, keenly interested.

"King Ragnuk the first accepted the friendship of Godric Gryffindor, and from that moment onwards, only pain and suffering came to the Goblin People."

Author's notes

And onwards, to the Past!

Ps: just discovered that now one may add 4 rather than 2 'main characters'. Thus I took the liberty of adding the Founders (since Salazar, Godric etcetera will come up later) Any suggestion on the last two to be filled? (consider leaving one empty for the 'romance' (if ever))

Harry Wyllt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter 11

"History tells us of how Godric Gryffindor bought the sword from King Ragnuk the First, in the eleventh century. History tells us of how he then stole the sword, by giving it to others, without paying its forger. That is not however, no matter what wizards may say, the reason we Goblins went to war." The Goblin spoke quietly.

"We went to war because Rowena Ravenclaw betrayed us. We went to war because Rhonwen daughter of Hengist and wife of Vortigern did not follow through with her oath to us. Story tells us of Hengist's son bringing forth the Kingdom of Kent, but it was Rhonwen's treachery that gave the Anglo-Saxons their lands. Vortigern wasn't the first to fall to her wiles however: even Herla did, but he is as much our fault as it is hers."

"Wait." Hermione blurted out. "The founders founded Hogwarts in the nine hundred-ninety and something; we are speaking of fifth century myths. The founders of Hogwarts weren't that old!"

"Indeed, they were not." The goblin replied, "Then again the first time around who knows how Great Britain was meant to be?"

"First time around?" Hermione's question was met with a snappish remark.

"Silence, child! Let me speak." The goblin hissed before coughing slightly.

"King Arthur, defender of the British throughout the late fifth century and the early sixth, fought against the Saxons invasion. He was the reason the Saxons hired mercenaries: he was the reason Rhonwen came to England with her father's men." The goblin smiled wickedly. "And he fought a great deal well, if history tells us anything, is that King Arthur did not die on the fields because of a honorable battle, but because of treachery and the wiles of the lady of the lake or of Morgan, his sister?" The goblin grinned. "And what if instead, it had been both the same and the very own?"

"Time cannot be changed past six hours, Duke Wyllt." The goblin chuckled. "And even then, perspective must be kept. One cannot go

back in time centuries, hope to change things and then return back to the future unscathed."

"Rowena Ravenclaw came from the past?" Hermione asked. Harry closed his eyes instead, his mind starting to slowly form some sort of line.

Some sort of twisted and sadistic, but extremely correct line.

"He is Salazar descendant." Peeves whispered with a small smile. "And you will find that being his descendant is enough also for Gryffindor's blood"

Salazar had loved Rowena. Morgan had been a half-sister of Arthur. Arthur was Godric's son. Morgan was Godric's daughter. Salazar held no Gryffindor blood in his line...but if Morgan and Rowena...were one and the same.

"Oh gods." He whispered in shock. "Oh gods." He added shaking. "Oh gods." His breath hitched and trembled as he shook his head, "No." He moaned. "No, no, no!"

"Harry?" Hermione's worried voice did nothing to stop him from ranting out.

"They're one and the same!" He exclaimed, "Rowena and Morgan: they were both the same person!"

"Indeed." The goblin nodded. "We sign contracts in blood." The creature added, "And when a contract is signed in blood, only the one who signed it can require of us, so we found out. We could not explain how two could be the same person...until a distraught Merlin Ambrosius came to us."

"A battle won, suddenly turned lost." The goblin whispered. "A battle lost, suddenly won." The creature shook her head. "He—"

"He wore the purple of the Romans." Harry muttered, as something suddenly made an incredible amount of sense, "And his tomb is hidden somewhere in Lourdes, wasn't it?"

"How do you know this, Duke Wyllt?" The goblin's eyes were wide enough to fill saucers. "It is one of the best kept secrets of the Goblins."

"The myth that Merlin fell asleep in a cave." He replied with his eyes glazed. "Yet in the forest of Brocéliande his tomb is said to reside. How could a single Merlin have two corpses?" Harry chuckled.

"He invented time travel." Harry spoke in awe, "He...the clock-tower." This time the chuckle became a laugh. "I knew it! Time cannot be altered by the Time-Turners, but something that can alter time exists!"

"Vortigern ruled in fear of Ambrosius." The goblin nodded, "And Ambrosius was feared because he knew where to strike Vortigern. Rhonwen killed Vortigern in the end, and whilst Aurelianus Ambrosius became known as the king among all the kings of the British nation, of Merlin we know he fell asleep in a cave."

"He had gone back in time." Harry understood. "He had gone back in time once, alone." He understood the memory of Salazar. "He ordered Salazar to name his child as him; maybe he wanted a better future for himself and his people? Once he did that however...Morgan was born, and Rowena erased from existence as a consequence."

"Duke Wyllt?" The goblin was now looking at him with a perplexed and surprised look.

"No two identical things may survive at the same time." Harry replied. "Two Present-selves can't live in the same time period. There can be many Past-Selves and Future-Selves back in time, but only a single Present-Self: if you place another, it means the Time-Turner was not used. With Time-Turners you cannot change the fact that you will have to go back in time to avoid the paradox...but not with Merlin's method."

Harry took a deep breath. "With his method, you could alter time." He whispered. "So you could have two same wizards or witches in the same present time-line! And that was something you could NOT have! The moment Merlin 'Ambrosius' realized that, he understood he had to force his young Merlin to do the same voyage as him! And

he did that. Only the second time around...Morgan went with him. The bastard daughter of Godric Gryffindor, half-sister of Arthur."

"And she became known as Rhonwen." The goblin suddenly understood. "And while the myth tells of Merlin engineering the birth of Arthur..."

"It could have been Morgan herself." Harry replied. "She could have done the same, but why? If Morgan took on the mantle of Rhonwen, she would have been on the opposite side of Merlin. Arthur was on Merlin's side, and it didn't make sense."

"How can Morgan be the sister of Arthur?" Hermione asked. "I mean, if Arthur is really of the fifth century, and Morgan came from the founder's times, there was just no way for her to be his half-sister now, right?"

"No, but the original Rowena could." Harry said. "If Arthur and Original-Rowena were brother and sister, Morgan could have gone back in time and taken her place."

"Rowena doesn't appear that old!" Hermione hissed back. "Her painting is—"

"Horcrux." To that single word, Hermione stared at him with a perplexed expression. "Philosopher's stone." He supplied, looking slightly embarrassed.

"Nicholas Flamel invented the stone far later!" She retorted.

"No." Harry chuckled. "Salazar invented the stone first, and if Merlin was his son, and Morgan was as smart as she could be...then she knew it too."

"So Morgan went back in time, killed Rowena and took her place in the time-line?" Hermione finally relented, nervously scribbling on a piece of parchment, wherever she managed to find one, a set of arrows and names.

"Yes." Both the goblin and Harry's eyes gleamed as the piece fell into place. "And that explains why the prophecy was made," the goblin replied. "Not now Duke Wyllt." The creature hastily added in seeing his curious expression, "First we must finish this puzzle."

"So Merlin invented the Clock-Tower," Harry pointed out, "He used it to go back in time and change the past. He reached the future and forced his new-present self to go back in time, but he went back with Morgan. Morgan killed Rowena and took her place, and then later on she had Merlin together with Salazar. In doing so she prevented the old Merlin from being 'real' and somehow sent him to sleep in a cavern?"

"How did the first Rowena survive to meet Salazar then?" Hermione asked perplexed.

"She didn't." Harry replied. "What we are living in now is the already 'altered' reality. A reality that has been altered at least twice: once by Merlin alone and the second time by Merlin and Morgan."

"Thankfully, the instrument was no longer used." The goblin commented. "We do not know of this 'clock-tower' Duke Wyllt, but we knew that somehow time had changed when two versions of the same person appeared in the world."

"And that explains why Rhonwen wasn't immediately on Merlin's side." Harry replied. "The past events had to be repeated, and so the cycle had to become self-sustainable. The Time-Turners could only alter the perspective of things, and since in the end Merlin was Morgan's son, she could not strike him down."

"Then again, she could imprison one of him." The boy suddenly added, as realization struck him. "To avoid the older Merlin, the one of the first time-trip, from coming out she had to trap him before it became apparent that Rhonwen and Morgan were actually the same person. That meant killing him or hiding him in a cave when the time came...and she did that." Harry commented. "She did just that."

"There were some interesting news of a break-in within the caves of the Lourdes, Duke Wyllt." The goblin commented. "Done with fire and ensnared by many traps. The tomb of Merlin was discovered and found empty."

"I know." Harry nodded. "I know because I will loot it." He suddenly added, realization striking him. "It makes sense." The boy flexed his right hand. "The Clock-Tower is at Hogwarts; somebody will try and use it. I will have to stop him. Something horrible will happen. I will

go back in time once to change the events, and then...then I will go back in time again to kill myself." His eyes widened like saucers. "That is why he was so much older than me." He murmured to himself, "That was why he was grieving so much." He shook his head. "It makes sense." He bitterly laughed. "So much sense it hurts."

"Stonehenge." Hermione suddenly said. "Merlin stole the Giant's stones from Ireland, brought them over to England and used them to mark the grave of Aurelianus."

"That...that probably makes more sense than Lourdes." Harry replied calmly. "But I wouldn't know that, if I hadn't asked you now, would I?" He turned thoughtful.

The first time around, none of this had previously happened. He was sure of it: there was a future-Harry going around, looting tombs and sites known to possess the tomb of Merlin for something. At the same time his...future-future-self had instead been dressed in a purple toga, meaning he had found the correct tomb.

"What of Mordred then?" Hermione asked once more, her eyes half-closed as she recalled the Arthurian mythology. "He was said to be the illegitimate son of Arthur, born of his Half-sister...Morgause."

"Who was a sister of Morgan," the goblin pointed out. "As far as the myth goes of course."

"We can safely assume..." Harry began, "That Morgan was Godric's and Therese daughter. She went back in time and killed Rowena Ravenclaw's past self, while holding to her the knowledge of the Philosopher's stone. Arthur was said to be—"

"Arthur is often thought to be the name of the first son of Godric Gryffindor." Hermione pointed out. "Kind of strange, don't you think?"

"My head is starting to hurt." Harry retorted. The boy frowned as he grasped at the parchment that Hermione had been writing on.

Chronological order of events.

Salazar Slytherin invents Philosopher Stone. Horcrux? (Ask Harry later)

Rowena Ravenclaw Some woman gives Salazar a son: Merlin (Ambrosius).

Merlin (Ambrosius) invents Time-Travel.

Merlin goes back, changes past. (Is split in Merlin Ambrosius and Myrddin Wyllt)

Morgan is born.

Old Merlin pushes young Merlin, son of Salazar and Rowena this time, (Wyllt?) to travel in time.

Young Merlin takes Morgan, (daughter of Godric and Therese?) with him.

Time-line changes again.

Morgan takes Rowena's place. She becomes the mother of Merlin and the wife of Salazar. (So there we now have two Merlins)

Myrddin Wyllt and Merlin Ambrosius both have to coexist in the past. (Since past is changed, they are split...does this mean that both can change the past at the same time? Or is it a domino effect?)

Morgan/Rowena is the half-sister of Arthur. (And Morgause too?)

Arthur is the first name of Godric Gryffindor's son. Godric is considered a descendant of his. What if...

What if Arthur had travelled together with Merlin and Morgan?

Merlin son of Salazar and Rowena/Morgan, Morgan daughter of Godric and Therese and Arthur son of Godric and who?

"A tale of two brothers and a sister." Harry whispered, "But why are there three brothers then?" He suddenly commented, remembering Peeves words. "Arthur was the son of Godric and Rowena. That was why Salazar was angry and felt betrayed."

"If that was the case," Hermione grabbed back the scroll and wrote it down nicely. "Then we have now three persons who went back in time. We are missing Morgause."

"No, we aren't." He shook his head. "It's easy to see." He pointed out with Hermione looking at him with surprise.

"Well?" The goblin said, looking with insistence at him and waiting.

"Helga Hufflepuff." He pointed out. "You have three wizards attempting some time-travel ritual, they are all connected one to the other in some way, not that they know of it, and they probably don't want their parents to enter the scene. So they speak of it to Helga, who agrees to help them out. The result is as you can expect: they all end up in the past, in the Arthurian times. Morgause is said to have remarried Uther, and then to have given birth to Mordred together with..."

"Ew!" Hermione winced closing her eyes. "I saw the portrait of Helga on Hogwarts: a History! That is an image I don't ever want to see again."

"So we have all the game pieces." The goblin acknowledged, "But why Helga in particular, Duke Wyllt?"

"Because I know from a trusty source that she was around with a cup made of Thestral bones somewhere in the beginning of the tenth century, while Hogwarts was founded later towards the end of it." He blinked. That actually explained something else. "The man spoke of something together with Salazar in that time period." He closed his eyes. "Salazar insisting on doing something, and he refusing. I never asked the details, but maybe I should have..."

"Indeed, you should have done so." The goblin snapped. "I thought we wouldn't talk this much of the past, and I truly didn't expect a veritable encyclopedia on Arthurian knowledge within your companion, Duke Wyllt. Yet I suppose that if Salazar was involved, then a most contorted plan had to be in motion at the time. The founders did great things, even before they began to teach." The creature shook its head. "I think time is passing too quickly, and we might not have enough time to speak of the reason you brought us here unless I speak now."

The goblin turned to look at Hermione. "Do you trust this woman, Duke Wylt? For the words I am about to tell you are of the utmost importance: they cannot slip out."

"With my life." Harry replied, hoping that he wouldn't get a headache out of whatever else the goblin had to speak of.

"Long time ago, a woman came to us with a prophecy." The goblin whispered, "She called herself Morgan, and the prophecy she spoke of was as followed: The lion will sorrow as Albion is conquered by the herald of change, while the Queen of the night will seduce the lord of deceit and the child will bring the twilight of a world and the sunrise of another...he will conquer the Darkness. Fire will fall and purify the world, as brimstone will crack and revenge will shine."

"So Rowena was a seer?" Hermione commented, puzzled.

"No." The goblin shook his head. "We looked. She could not access the prophecy."

"Of course she couldn't." He whispered. "The original Morgan was a seer. The Lady of the Lake was the one who trapped Merlin after taking all of his secrets from him and Merlin...Merlin knew and left himself be captured."

"Which makes sense," Hermione blinked. "He knew time had to flow in the same way, he wasn't prophetic: he just knew what was going to happen beforehand!"

"And if the original Morgan became the lady of the lake, then Rhonwen-Morgan became Morgan le Fay, who stole the scabbard of Excalibur and delivered it to the lake." Harry replied, a smile forming on his lips.

"In that way the prophecy with the part of 'the lion will sorrow' makes sense. In the end Arthur does grief and he dies, by the hand of Mordred. So if Mordred was the son of Helga, are we sure 'Uther' was his father?"

The goblin coughed. "Might we return to the questions at hand?"

"Sorry," Hermione blushed slightly, scribbling down on her parchment a few more lines. "Please proceed."

"Good." The creature snorted, before continuing his tale. "Gringotts feared the prophecy could mean potential disaster, and during the ages we have walked a thin line in trying to find out anything that could relate to it. The Lord of Deceit seemed clearly Salazar, and the Queen of the night could be Rowena Ravenclaw, as the surname 'raven' was meant for crows. Yet the line of Merlin had apparently died down and split, and we did not think much about the cadet branches or the squibs or the muggles." The goblin shook his head. "Until you came to our attention, on the thirty-first of July of nineteen eighty-five."

"It was the date my aunt and uncle adopted me." He pointed out calmly. "I was five, they sat me down and told me I had been adopted, and then they told me of how my biological parents had died." He closed his eyes. "Since I was a wizard that was probably all that it took for you to take notice."

"Yes." The goblin nodded. "It was all that it took."

"So a prophecy of centuries ago is coming back in the present?" He whispered back. "And what did the goblin think it would entail?"

"The twilight of a world can be many things, but it is clear that the way the wizardry society is will change through your actions." The creature pointed his crooked finger towards him. "We gave you Merlin's Time-Turner for a reason, Duke Wyllt. It called to you and we answered his call. Objects know, they always do, who their owner truly is. We goblins understand that, and that is a reason we are good at what we do." The goblin chuckled. "We think that helping you will be good in the long run, Duke Wyllt. You need but ask, and the goblin nation will help you."

"You never told me your name." Harry whispered.

"I am Ragnuk the twenty-seventh, King of the Goblins." The goblin smiled a wicked grin, flexing his fingers together, "And when the society of wizards will crumble and be reborn, well, I hope you will keep on using Gringotts' services."

"I suppose we could do that." Harry smiled back, taking a small breath. "There are still some loose ends in our rendition of past events though."

"Time is growing late however, Duke Wyllt. I'm thankful we could clear up a few of the...mysteries, behind the founder's history and before. If the Clock-Tower is at Hogwarts, you should sign the documents of ownership for an easier..." King Ragnuk blinked. "Which you already did. So we did have this conversation once before in an alternative time-line." The goblin actually laughed then. "How amusing! I wonder when you will have to go back in time to avoid the paradox then, Duke Wyllt."

Hermione frowned, but said nothing as the goblin King merely bid them goodbye and opened the door to let them out under the invisibility cloak. They left through the front door, quietly walking through the now pitch black streets.

"Harry." Hermione whispered. "What's going on? The goblin called you Duke Wyllt: does this have anything to do with that morning in the dining hall?"

"It was me." He replied. "I receive the Time-Turner from Professor Flitwick, went back in time and jinxed myself. I didn't write on the wall however: it is probable my future-self in the present did that."

Hermione remained quiet for a moment, as the light breeze of the night whistled around them. "Harry, do you think there is a future-me with you now?"

The question was loaded with a lot of ifs and buts, and he knew what Hermione really wanted to ask him wasn't that at all. He just smiled and replied.

"Of course, Hermion—"

Hooves clopped on the ground with the strength of thunders. The bellowing cries of the horses broke apart the unnatural silence of the night as the screams and howls of a charge surrounded them. Ghostly figures and blood-red ethereal beasts howled and yelled. Harry pinned Hermione down, Excalibur coming to his hand within a mere instant.

"Show yourself, heir of Wyllt! Show yourself, heir of our enemy!" The wails increased in intensity, and Excalibur hummed. "We know you're there!"

The barking of the dogs now finally came to their ears again, and with that the hunt was off once more. He knelt on the ground holding tightly on Hermione, as the ethereal specters literally drove through them and past them.

He held his breath as silence descended once more on the road. "Harry." Hermione whispered with pain and fright in her voice. "What were those things?" She hissed, her body trembling as she clutched tightly to his robes, trying to burrow into his chest probably.

"I don't know." He whispered back. "But a future-me might."

They stilled as the howls seemed to come back.

"They can hear you." Hermione hissed. "Keep quiet and let's go."

He shook his head in silence, grasping at the Time-Turner and pointing at it.

"Harry, you can't be serious!" Hermione scathingly hissed. "You can't use that to solve all of your problems! You have to use it responsibly! We're in this mess because of what you did with it, or what you're going to do with it!"

"Her—"

Hermione's hand shot forward quickly, slapping him on the cheek and giving him a sour look.

"Silence!" She hissed, the barks growing slightly closer. "I speak, you listen for once! You will not use the Time-Turner again! Do you hear me Harry James Potter!? This ends now! An unregistered Time-Turner is dangerous, and could get you in dire straits with the ministry!"

He brought his left hand to his flaming cheek, as Excalibur returned within his wand.

"And now we will walk back to our school, and while we are walking I will talk and you will listen." Then the girl huffed and grasped at his arm, pulling him up together with her.

"I think Merlin wanted to try and work on a time-travel machine, you know, sort of like that book 'The Time Machine' of Wells. He just wanted to do that with magic, and he succeeded. Then he made a mess and tried to clean it up, but it became worse. In the end he had to hide his invention, or the magic to use it, and hope it would suffice."

She explained calmly. "I don't know much about the founders' actions in the past, but it seems all like some sort of bullshit trashy novel." He widened his eyes at such a crude language. "I mean: maybe Rhonwen was a whore, all right, but why would Morgan want her dead? Why would Helga Hufflepuff, I mean Harry, really? Couldn't it have been someone else like Salazar's evil twin sister? Helga Hufflepuff birthing Mordred? Come on: that's as far-stretched as it could be!"

She tightened her grip on his arm, making him wince. "I think that maybe, just maybe, Arthur, Merlin and Morgan went back in time. Only those three did: Helga was probably just older than the rest of the founders, or maybe she and Salazar knew each other before. Maybe Morgause was just a figure added to the myth later on; there is no reason for the mythological Arthurian legends to actually be completely true." She added.

"After all, the past is the past, right?"

Future-Future-Harry in Present Time

The stones hummed with power. Raw, unaltered power from eons past. The sun that rose was tinged a dark red color. The crimson light poured through the cracks of the centuries old construction, the bones of the deceased hidden within suddenly warming up, as the tendrils of magic erupted around him.

"I think you should leave." A voice whispered. "I really think you should be elsewhere." Another voice, female this time, added. Just echoes of the past, ringing through his ears. "This isn't your place."

"This isn't your time." A fourth one joined the chorus. "Why are you here?"

"In March will we rise?" A more hopeful voice joined, coming from a child no less. "Will we fight?"

"Haven't you stooped low enough to win your battles, Arthur?" A sharp sickening voice growled through the others. "I smell the rot of your soul, foul spawn."

"Aurelianus." He whispered back, a small smile on his face. "My, does time really fly."

"You cannot bring us back yet, and I hope the Hunt will get to you earlier."

"Oh, your sickening tools of murder." Arthur replied with a small smile. "No matter, it is not important. Where is the key?"

"You cannot intimidate a dead man, Arthur." The voice whispered. "You cannot offer me anything."

He frowned, slightly. "Maybe." He acknowledged, "Or maybe not." His hand moved around a small red pebble, taking it out of his sleeve. "Wouldn't you want to live again?"

"Foul." The voice spat, suddenly drowned by a myriad of others who began to plead. "Fouls! Never trust a devil's spawn!"

"I am not the son of the devil, Aurelianus. You wound me so much it hurts." He mock-pouted, taking a few steps through the circle of giant stones. "My powers are waned within this mortal coil. If you do not wish for life, what then will grant me my might back?"

"Nothing." The whisper harshly intoned. "I did not build Stonehenge for your treachery against Death and Time."

"Maybe not, but you all but cast the first pebble." He snarled back. "This is your entire fault, Aurelianus! You could not tolerate loss, could you!? You had to win your war! How do you think I felt, knowing that I was nothing more than a puppet of flesh!? And even then, all was taken from me when another one came forward! Oh but he at least did not die in vain, didn't he!? You strapped him on a horse and claimed him leader of the Hunt!"

"My faults are mine to pay." Aurelianus whispered calmly. "But you will not get what you desire from me."

"I am King Arthur!" He screamed, Excalibur in his hand as it cut through one of the stones as if it was nothing more than butter. "Grant me what I desire, or be destroyed!"

"You are nothing more than a petulant child, one I raised to his position!" Aurelianus hissed back, his ghostly form appearing in the middle of the circle of stone blocks. "You will have nothing from me!"

"You forget yourself, Merlin." Arthur murmured, as Excalibur flew in the air with speed. It struck the ghostly apparition through the chest, tearing apart the ectoplasm that composed the ethereal humanoid figure. "With or without you," he added, "I will find the key and make things right."

"You're too late." The ghost chuckled as it began to disperse. "But I thank you, Arthur: at last...I may be free."

And with those words, the ghost of Aurelianus Ambrosius, known as Merlin, dispersed into a thin fog that rose towards the skies. In the following silence, only the ragged breathing of Harry was heard in the otherwise silent site.

The stones did not hum. The magic was no longer there.

"I am not too late." He snarled, grasping at the Time-Turner in his hand. "Time is mine to command!"

Future-Harry in Present Time

"My tomb is there, my heir." Aurelianus spoke gravely, his finger pointing at one of the half broken stones that seemed no different from the others. "The key to the Clock-Tower lies within my bones. They..." Harry suddenly gasped, clutching at his chest as blood began to seep through, Sophie trilled in fear, flapping her powerful wings as she rose in the sky. From behind a stone another he marched forward, his eyes ablaze with fury.

"So that's where the key is!" The Future-Him snarled, the sword of Excalibur shining and enflamed, as with the flick of his wandless hand the giant stone itself began to float, before coming down quickly against him.

He jumped to the side, coughing blood as he could feel the coppery taste in his tongue. His breathing was ragged as the figure that so much resembled him stood quietly and amusingly watching him.

"Well, well." The Future-Him seemed to be smiling. "Looks like your phoenix abandoned you." The mocking tone turned wistful. "She did that with me too." He acknowledged. "To her, you and I are the same after all. She's but a beast isn't she? Can't even distinguish future from past."

He gritted his teeth as the future-him slowly began to close in the distance.

"Control yourself." Henry stated, "To keep calm is the first way to battle. To assess the strength of the enemy the second, and to deliver a crippling blow is the third and final way."

"You will fail youngling, just like others who still hold to their humanity do. In the end you will consume yourself with grief. Worry not, no-one is a judge here...we have already been judged and found lacking after all by the gods themselves, what else is there to insist upon?"

"And then because Red Riding Hood was a stupid, lurid, wretch of a whorish idiot the big bad wolf ate her too. Then the hunter came by, and killed the big bad wolf. He probably also killed the grandmother and red riding hood, since the hunter is a psycho bastard to boot, but who are we to say any different?"

Future-Him stilled. He narrowed his eyes at him and then slowly took a step backwards.

"I see." The figure muttered. "I will not kill you then." A wave of the wand later and he felt a sharp burning sound clutch at his chest, the wounds inflicted closing up as he screamed and trashed about in pain.

"Until we meet again..." And then the Future-Him summoned from the hole in the ground a white bone, and disappeared with it a second later.

He breathed slowly, feeling a sensation of tiredness settle over him. Sophie flapped her wings and slowly flew back down, nearing him and starting to cry while nuzzling his cheek.

In that moment, Harry Potter felt rage. The phoenix could have helped him. The bird could have at least healed him, or stopped his future-self from doing what he was doing. The creature could have done anything...and yet had chosen not to.

Angrily he screamed while pushing the bird off his chest. Sophie answered by screaming and scratching with her talons in defense against his face, but his hands clutched against the bird's neck, and with a sickening snap sound, the phoenix erupted into a smoldering pile of ashes.

He gasped for air as he brought both of his hands on the ground to steady himself, and when recollection of what he had done reached him, he shuddered and retched on the ground, before staring at his trembling hands. The soft and pitiful crying sounds of the baby Sophie reached his ears, and yet he found himself terribly ashamed and unable to even look back at the gentle creature he had murdered with his own hands in a fit of rage.

He slowly wobbled back on his feet, and with the still hearable sounds of the small bird crying he clutched his Time-Turner and spun it around, leaving Sophie there to her fate.

At least now he knew where he had gotten those scratches.

Author's notes

Confused? Worry not.

First off, parents & children:

Godric+Therese= Morgan

Godric+Rowena= Arthur

Salazar+Rowena= Merlin and Helena

Salazar+? = Henry

This means that: Arthur is the half-brother of Merlin, Helena and Morgan.

Helena Ravenclaw is the half-sister of Henry.

Pre-Founders era Plot-Line

Basic Arthurian myth has:

Arthur+Morgause= Mordred

Arthur is half-brother of Morgause and Morgan Le Fay.

Merlin is older than Arthur, is bewitched by Lady of the Lake, and is sent to slumber in cave.

Fanfic Plot-line:

Merlin Ambrosius invents Time-Travel.

He goes back in time and changes things. Now, in the future, (which is his present) there are both himself and a young Morgan. Due to a mishap in old Merlin forcing young him to time-travel, young-him, Arthur and Morgan end up 'travelling' back in time.

They change things further on, resulting in a dire set of questionable events that lead to the ultimate conclusion of:

Arthur's soul ensnared in Hogwarts' cornerstone. Morgan becoming Rowena Ravenclaw and taking her place, (thus actually...birthing herself) and Merlin (Young) becoming half-mad and sent in the sunken city while Merlin (Old) 'fell asleep in a cave'.

However their going back in time 'split' them, forcing them to take care of their 'original' counterparts. (Since otherwise there would be two back-in-time present selves because of Merlin's method) that forced Merlin (Old) to make Original-Arthur (the real ancestor of Godric) the head of the hunt and 'send him away' for 'two-hundred' years. (Thanks to the help of Rhonwen/Morgan) and that fits with the myths. Meanwhile the other Arthur ended up in the stone, and later became known as Peeves. (by now this is easily understandable)

Since Salazar's method of 'reinforcing' wards was: "souls" and possible torturing of said souls, it's clear Arthur turned mad.

Back to the Pre-Founder's era plot though!

Meanwhile, since there now were an Original-Morgan and a Morgan, one took on the role of Morgan LeFay/Rowena Ravenclaw and the other that of the Lady of the Lake. (Since the Lady of the Lake then disappeared, it is clear which of the two 'fell asleep')

That done, we now move on to the Founder's Era plot-line.

Salazar, Godric, Rowena and Helga found Hogwarts.

Before doing so however 'various things' happen to them.

Helga poisons and kills Oleg of Novgorod, after Salazar's failed attempt at diplomacy with the man (for what, we still don't know)

Godric steals the goblin sword of Ragnuk, and has the armor of another wizard brought to him after using Amortentia on Therese, (with whom he has Morgan) {It is speculated that children born through Amortentia lack the emotion to love, since it is not canon, I will just leave it here in the notes, just to ironize on the fact that both Morgan and Voldemort share the same 'background'.}

Rowena meanwhile delivers a prophecy to the Goblins, (The real Rowena, not the Morgan substitute) and this displays the fact that Prophecies are unbound by the changes of time. Even when Morgan substitutes Rowena, she does not, in fact, react to the prophecy (Or so the goblin says) meaning that Rowena did exist in the 'original time-line' and that whatever she was, she certainly was a seer too.

Rowena/Morgan instead survives with the Philosopher's stone, takes the place of Rowena in all and the rest is history.

Salazar...Salazar did many things. He travelled through the world and created a Horcrux from his wand, while making himself a Dementor too. He tried to reason with Oleg concerning something and he was apparently in friendship with Rowena.

Author's notes of notes.

This chapter was mostly a 'clear the air' and 'show the mechanics' of Time-Travel.

The end result is that the past-story of the founders' children is somewhat explained repeatedly, in different degrees of completeness and complexity, but that in the end should either give the readers a wonderful head-ache or a perfectly understandable view of just how 'Games of Throne-sque' the past was.

The goblin-speech at the beginning shows the 'historical' side of the coin. Herla, Hengist and Rhonwen, Vortigern and the likes.

In truth the 'wizardry' sides has Arthur taking on the role both of himself and of Herla (albeit one was the Original-Arthur and the other wasn't)

Of course we aren't yet reaching the true apex of 'screwed over': we still have to see how Harry will survive being killed by his past-self.

Now that I took a load off my chest, (The revelation of some stuff in the founders' era) I can happily bring my brain in cooldown mode for a while.

Harry Wyllt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter 12

Tracey Davis knelt and accepted Hermione's spell to mark her as one of the Knights of the King. The Slytherin girl was the latest, but would certainly not be the last, of those who accepted the full weight of their responsibilities. Draco had pledged for her, and he had acknowledged the girl as trustworthy. The number of Knights now rose to three; Harry nodded quietly to the girl, who made a small weak smile and a curtsy before nursing her shoulder and walking slowly back to Draco's side.

To change the world one could scream until the throat ran dry, or he could make noise somewhere and stab elsewhere. He did feel particularly affronted at the memory of his past mistakes. To merely scream in the middle of the entrance hall wasn't the same as taking his men one by one. Handpicking was a prerequisite to any successful organization...and now he knew it.

He turned his gaze to Hermione, who nodded and slowly, but surely, began to fill in their recent addition on everything that had transpired till then. His 'left hand' spoke to the girl from Dumbledore's real face, to the need to learn Occlumency and keep her gaze away from Snape and the Headmaster, and as the book on Legilimency and how to defend against it passed hands, he smiled slowly.

One more trustworthy person was now added in his small world. As the two girls talked, Draco slowly moved closer to him. The chamber of secret echoed with the low murmurs and the soft gasps of Tracey, as Hermione's voice instead rang clearly and coldly as the brown haired girl told of his identity as Duke Wyllt and everything else they would need to know. The Ravenclaw girl was still angry at him, especially because he had hidden from her some small bits of information.

Never mind the fact that those bits concerned his future death at the hands of his past self. Or him hiding the presence of the Time-Turner, or the fact he was apparently hunted down by the Wild Hunt itself.

"My King," Draco whispered, "my father is pleased. He told me that the Dark Lord is planning something grand." Harry brought an

eyebrow and grinned slightly. The unbreakable vow with the Dark Lord was useless if Draco merely referred hearsay. "He has taken the helm of the Greek Supremacy movement, so my father says." There was a small smile on the blond boy's lips, soon accompanied by an even wider one when the Malfoy heir did not actually die. He hadn't broken his vow. Whatever it was, it had to be either pretty loose or extremely easy for Draco to bypass.

"I see." He replied, flicking his wand as a wooden table and a map appeared in front of them. He turned a thoughtful gaze towards the situation of the world, before slowly blotching in a dark colour all of Greece. "Then Greece is lost." He muttered, before tipping slightly his wand on Europe, colouring it a light grey except for Italy that slowly turned blue.

"We have a friend at the Universitatis," Harry explained to the puzzled Draco. "He told us there is no mention of purist moves, and even the nationalists are nowhere as active as in Greece. He did insist on remarking that all muggle Italians are generally too busy with soccer and pizza to generally care about who governs them, but I think he was joking." He mumbled. "They would recognize being ruled by monkeys, right?"

"The ministry." Draco deadpanned.

"You're right." Harry acquiesced, wistfully turning to England, and colouring it red. He then pointed at the depiction of Hogwarts, and that he coloured gold. "This is where we start."

"Dumbledore's held by a thin thread, but Fudge is turning it into a rope." He slowly twirled the wand, pointing towards London now. "The prime minister on the Fourth of February will demand me to turn the rope into a steel chain. Now, what could I do to oust him out of Hogwarts permanently?"

"You own the castle, Harry." Draco replied, "You could just, you know, banish him from the grounds. You're the heir of Salazar and all: just sign over the deeds of Hogwarts, make a warning during a public event, and the laws should be in your favour since Hogwarts is private propriety. If he doesn't comply he'll have to break down more than a hundred laws just to remain seated, and that's just too much work."

Thoughtfully, Harry's eyes settled on the map. The deeds had already been signed. He had made a warning during a public event, considering he had written on the ceiling of the castle of Hogwarts, and that had been as public as it could have been, that he had claimed the castle for himself. Did this mean precisely what he thought it did?

Apparently, he had gone back in time precisely for that purpose. He was starting to wonder when he was meant to use the Time-Turner and how far back he'd have to go to make it all 'fix'. Had he maybe used the Clock-Tower's ability?

That was a possibility after all. "So I throw him out of Hogwarts and what then?"

"Then you take his place," Draco replied calmly. "The castle is magical, Harry. It already understands you're its owner; look at what you can do by just asking it! The house elves are bound to the castle, and that's why they love you—"

"So that's the reason!" He exclaimed, "And you think the ministry wouldn't act on it?"

"Not if you name someone else as Headmaster. The castle is yours: how you rule it, if you want to turn it into a thermal resort or not and so on are all things you get to decide."

He frowned for a moment, before acknowledging Draco's words. "I suppose it's true." I suppose it's something I already did.

Tracey and Draco were soon excused, and as he too was about to open the stone snake head towards the Ravenclaw dormitories, he stilled when Hermione hesitantly began to speak.

"Harry," the girl gently stopped him by grabbing his robe's sleeve, holding it with her index and thumb shyly; her features paled as if she had just then realized something horrible, "what did you mean, with the king of the goblins, when you said that you would go back in time to kill yourself?"

He stilled at that question, before slowly turning around.

"Hermione, I..."

He had expected her to be angry at him. He had expected her to yell at him just like she had done with the Time-Turner, but instead there was some sort of cool and cold face now meeting his own. He didn't know why, but he felt there was something extremely wrong with that type of emotion. Hermione wasn't the type for the Ice Queen mask. She had her heart on her sleeve. She could cry and laugh and display cold and calculative thoughts when needed, but she was human first and foremost.

She shouldn't have to display that type of face.

"I love you, Harry." She mechanically intoned, like some sort of broken record. "Why...Why would you.. Why would you kill yourself if I love you?" She mumbled. "You're not going to die." She sniffled. "Not in the past, the present, the future or out of whatever else playing with time brought you. Do you hear me?" She whispered, slowly moving closer to him and encircling his right arm with her own. "Do you hear me?" She repeated softly, holding tightly on his limb.

So tightly it began to hurt.

"Yes, Hermione," he replied uneasily. "I heard you."

"Good. That's good." She quipped out, blinking her eyes for a moment as she displayed a now sunny face. "I'm glad we fixed this! Really glad! Now kiss me, Harry." She added with a sultry tone and a cheeky smile.

"Herm—" And then the girl kissed him, cutting off what he had wanted to say. Hermione needed psychiatric help, he had to talk with Madam Pomfrey as soon as possible, he just knew he was on bought time, and what little he had was running out.

Ironical, considering he had a Time-Turner he could use.

It was then that he heard the whispered murmur of a Petrificus Totalus hit him at point blank in the chest. It was then that he saw Hermione take one step back and smile tenderly. "I knew I wouldn't die for this: I'm not betraying you, Harry. I'm helping you! Now I'll get you rid of the Time-Turner, and everything will be fine." She moved her hands across his robes, frowning as she touched, pinched, and

pushed apart the folds of his robes while looking for the pocket with the Time-Turner.

She wasn't going to find it, because it was within the folds of his Invisible cloak, and there was no way she would be able to...

"Imperio." Hermione stilled. Harry resisted the urge to widen his eyes in sheer shock at the glazed look of the girl. Then the Ravenclaw student walked away, turning around to face the other side of the wall before a jet red light struck the girl down.

"Imperio." He felt as if somebody had placed his entire head within a much comfortable type of jelly. The Petrificus Totalus was removed a second later, but he no longer felt the need to move away. He felt kind of elated and happy.

Hand over the Time-Turner. The voice was clear-cut and snappish. It was precise, feminine and seemed even a bit arrogant as it spoke. He saw his hand moving before he could even realize it, and as he gritted his teeth trying to stop it, he began to tremble.

Hand over the Time-Turner! This time the command came as a scream, and both of his hands jerked in effort as he grabbed the chain of the Time-Turner and removed it from his neck, before turning around to deliver it. The figure in front of him held a mask of silver and gold, so reminiscent of Duke Wyllt's one. Yet he knew this was not Duke Wyllt. The form was correct, even the body was the same as his and the eyes were the dark green of his...but the way he held himself wasn't.

There was no flash of the past memories trying to merge, as he took a step forward with the Time-Turner in hand.

"Accio Merlin's Time-Turner!" The voice barked out, as the Time-Turner flew out of his hands and into those of the masked man. "Stupefy." A jet of red clashed against his chest, and the next moment he saw nothing more than inky darkness.

Ron Weasley

He gritted his teeth and grumbled, at the sight of Lillian walking dejectedly along the corridor. Why the girl insisted on being a Gryffindor, when she clearly was meant for Slytherin or some Dark

place like Durmstrang, he didn't know. Maybe it was the family relation with the professor of Defence Against the Dark Arts, but he still couldn't understand. When Ginny had turned evil, his mother had wailed for days before coming to terms with it and blasting the girl off the Weasley tapestry.

As his eyes trailed off the retreating figure of Lillian, he felt a pair of hands slowly drop upon his shoulders.

"Brother, oh brother of mine." Fred began with a smile.

"What do I see, that isn't nice?" George continued, snickering slightly.

"Little Ickle Ronniekins I spot with my eye!" Fred chuckled.

"Staring and gazing a girl, oh my!" George finished. Ron tried to remove the hands of the twins from his shoulders, and his brothers relented quite immediately.

"Get off!"

"Now, now little brother, this isn't fair." Fred shook his head. "What are you doing? Staring at the Potter girl now?"

"None of your bloody business," Ron snarled back. Huffing as he began to move away.

"Poor brother of ours," George began shaking his head and clicking his tongue as he followed behind him, "So underestimating our ability to follow."

"It's not that difficult dear Forge: right leg, left leg, right foot, left foot." Fred mockingly replied.

"Can't you two bloody gits go elsewhere?" He whined. Why did the two have to follow him?

"You know, brother of ours." George stopped him, pushing him against the wall while Fred looked around: to make sure nobody was in sight. Ron paled as they were standing in the circular stairway, with no paintings on the walls or around him. This felt just like when he was forced to become their prank tester at home. They would pin

him down and force him to chuck down something that would then embarrass him or hurt him.

He had spent enough time at St. Mungo to be called by name by the nurses, but they had stopped once school had started.

Quietly, George slipped him a small vial within the pockets of his robes.

"What I just gave you," his red haired older brother whispered, "is something you can use to keep Lillian away from her brother: just make her drink it, maybe after the Quidditch trials when you want to apologize to her."

"What —is it a prank? What is in the—" His mouth was forced shut by George, who still with a look that seemed positively murderous continued speaking.

"Listen: it's a wit-sharpening potion. Nothing illegal, but she wouldn't drink it if you offered it to her. She's delusional that her brother's a saint, so you have to make her understand he isn't. Now I'll remove the hand, don't scream." As his brother warned him, he nodded with his eyes. The moment the hand was off, he asked.

"Why can't I just tell her?"

"She's a girl Ron; girls don't like being told they're wrong." Fred intervened, "With this she'll realize on her own. Just mix it in a water bottle before handing it out to her during the try-outs. Wood is having her try back into seeker in an hour, since the team needs her and all, and if you do this, well you might just get lucky..." And then his brothers disappeared, leaving him there dumbfounded and perplexed.

He eyed the vial in his pocket carefully, a pearly colour showing itself in the faint light of the stairs. He uncorked the glass and sniffed it cautiously. It smelt like broom polish and something else he couldn't quite place, but it did have a familiar smell. He corked the vial and placed it back into his pocket, before slowly making his way to the Quidditch pitch.

If this was not a prank, then maybe he owned his brothers.

If it was, he just hoped Lillian would laugh for it.

Sirius Black

He didn't even know why he tried. He just knew he had to try. Once more, he firmly pulled at the frame of his mother, the obnoxious painting still screaming curses and insults. Peter was free, at Hogwarts or nearby, and every house he could have access to would be checked. A Fidelius was going to soon cover his old ancestral house, since not possessing any type of garden to begin with; it made for the perfect way to keep out pesky rats.

He even had a few kneazles running around, and a couple were pretty mean. He shuddered as he heard a sharp crack, while the wails of his mother intensified.

"Scum! Blood traitor! Dishonourable bastard! Kreacher! Kreacher please!"

"Kreacher's dead, mother dear." He wheezed out, panting from the effort. The frame had split, but the painting still appeared to be holding.

"No! You lie! His head is not mounted on—"

"That barbaric tradition is something I am glad I stopped." Sirius remarked, "I threw away all the heads, by the way."

"You horrendous and blasphemous—"

"It's getting old, dear old mother. How about you pass on too?" He snappishly remarked.

"You don't want to remove me, Sirius." He stilled for a moment. The voice of his mother was calm and collected now, terribly different from just a moment ago.

"Mother?" His breath hitched as the female in the painting eyed him with a look of pure disgust.

"You are a failure. I am warning you, Sirius. Do not meddle with things you cannot understand."

He gritted his teeth. His hands moved to the sides of the painting and then, with a final pull, a sharp crack and the sound of breaking cloth the painting came loose and broke apart.

Sirius sighed in relief as he slumped on the ground, rolling his eyes as he began to grasp at the pieces of the now 'deceased' painting. Magic didn't work to remove it, so only brute strength had remained as an alternative. He had used it. It had worked.

As he removed the old bits and pieces of the painting, he frowned. There was something hidden behind the wallpaper. He could feel some sort of metallic surface, and as his wand with a quick cutting curse revealed what lay beneath, he stilled his breath.

There was a large rectangular metal sheet, covered in silver snakes and bronze ravens. The silver snakes seemed to act as perches for the bronze ravens, which instead held their wings wide open, as if ready to fly away.

At the centre of the depiction, a keyhole stood in wait.

"So that's why there was a powerful sticking charm on it." He mumbled as he absentmindedly scratched his chin. He was feeling sort of scratchy. "I wonder what's behind this."

He took a step backwards, before pulling out his wand...and stilling.

His hand was covered in green blisters now.

No, more than that, it was covered as if he was going through Dragonpox, only he wasn't actually feeling it. He was just slightly scratching, it wasn't as if...

"My father," he murmured. "He's the one who placed...the defences."

Then he screamed.

He screamed as his hand turned green and mossy, he screamed as bones remained in place of his arm. He screamed as the moss, the fungus, whatever it was that the painting had hidden now came to life, a final defence against intruders. A final defence he had not been told.

He screamed.

And then he fell on the ground clutching his body tightly, shivering as sweat poured down his forehead and he felt himself spasm and contract all of his muscles. He was hallucinating.

He shuddered as he brought out his wand, ready to call for help, but as he was about to speak he bit his own tongue from the tremors he felt. The taste of blood down his throat made him gag, but as his sight blurred he heard the meowling and the hissing of the kneazles, soon followed by a set of steps being cautiously walked.

Maybe James had come to see him.

"P...Prongs!" He screamed, trying to get his friend's attention.

The footsteps grew louder. As his strengths left him, the last thing he saw was the hunched over and beady eyed form of Peter, kneeling down near him.

Professor Graham

Her right hand was toying with the small pendant. It was a bauble, completely worthless. Something gifted during a Hogsmeade weekend, when things were nice and everything quiet. She had giggled like a madwoman for the rest of the day, and had snogged the daylights out of him afterwards. She gently pulled on it, letting it move to the right and to the left as she felt the metal chain dig into the skin of her neck.

She could have had him for longer than just a mere half year. She could have had him longer than just a few years. She could have had him for eternity and beyond and instead he had been taken away. They had stolen him. She didn't care about the others, all sacrifices even if innocent. All that she cared about was him. If she had to build him a bridge to safety with the bones of the innocent, then she would do just that.

She looked out of the window, staring with a cold and calculative gaze at the red haired imbecile called Ron, making his way towards the Quidditch pitch. She grinned slightly when Lillian and him began

to talk, and the grin turned into a smile when the girl accepted the beverage.

One less obstacle, one less problem, and everything would be fine.

She remembered the ideas of Harry. She remembered his decision of claiming Peter innocent in the middle of the ceremony for the Order of Merlin. She knew he was thinking of sending Lillian to ask for Veritaserum to his father, rather than asking himself. He didn't believe the man would comply if he was the one to ask, but his sister? His sister would.

She was so willing to prove herself to her brother, it made her sick.

Lillian was just a stupid cry baby, one that in the middle of the ceremony had done an extremely stupid thing, knocking unconscious Peter before he could have a chance to explain himself and thus playing in the hands of the ministry. The man had been killed a second later by a withering curse, courtesy of a mysterious assassin in the audience.

Her beloved one was trying his best of course, and would keep on trying, and she would be there behind the curtains, helping him every single step of the way. Another scandal on the Girl-Who-Lived would destroy the Dumbledore faction of the light, and would push all the chips on Harry as a figurehead. The moment the figurehead spoke, the people would follow.

She just had to write a nice letter to Skeeter.

That woman was so easy to manipulate.

She hesitantly touched the Time-Turner within her coat. This hateful object had been the cause of everything, and yet she couldn't destroy it. Fiendfyre didn't work. The most powerful spells didn't even scratch it. Her only choice was to keep it hidden, and hope for the best. She was sure nobody would consider her the culprit after all. Harry wasn't able to accuse her, polyjuiced as she was, and she had been waiting near the secret entrance for a long while after all.

Creeping behind him hadn't been difficult. She remembered the scene. Her Harry had forgiven her so easily that day. He had

understood her, and had hugged her so tenderly she still felt the warmth even there and then.

She giggled like a schoolgirl.

Lillian was now looking at Ron like a tiger stares at a piece of meat. She had a few days to write to Skeeter, and the animagus reporter would probably be in the castle in hours after receiving her letter.

And she would just so casually be there too, to discover where the two teens had gone. Oh, it was going to be a field day...but at the end of it all, her beloved would be the only figurehead anyone with a grain of salt would wish to follow, the Weasley would be utterly destroyed as well as Lillian, and Dumbledore's plans would be sent in disarray.

"Don't worry, my love," she whispered to her pendant. "I'll always be by your side."

The twins entered the classroom smiling, their faces actually displaying to a keen eye the glazed look of the Imperius. She smiled, before briefly pointing her wand at them and hissing out.

"Obliviate."

No matter the innocent blood spilled, her beloved would win.

Future-Harry

He stumbled through the ministry, his Invisibility cloak hiding him from detector spells and from the wards themselves. The Department of Mysteries was his destination, the place where the Time-Turners were stored. He couldn't have the people at the ministry use them to change the perspective of events. Not with what would happen on the Fourth of February. It was an important date.

It was an important date, and he would everything in his power to make it real. He would everything he could to change the outcome. It didn't matter that Fiendfyre would probably burn or kill some of the trapped Unspeakables, it didn't matter that he might colour his hands red in blood. This was for the Greater Good; this was for a

better future. The lives of many were worthier than the lives of few. The stalking had finally given him benefit.

An Unspeakable slowly walked into the lift, and he followed quietly behind. A muffling charm to his feet and even noise was taken care of. They descended and reached the right floor within minutes, and as he walked behind the wizard, putting his steps down just as he did, he passed through various doors.

Hermione had told him that Time-Turners were held in the Department of Mysteries. Of course nobody knew where, but he knew they were meant to be somewhere. He could hear the muffled talking of various witches and wizards—all highly trained aurors—around him. Harry flinched as he barely avoided barrelling into a door that had just then opened.

"I'm telling you, the Time-Turners are going mad." A gruff voice remarked, immediately catching his attention.

"They're Time-Turners, they're meant to have inexplicable problems: they govern time, not something like the flow of traffic in the floo." Another voice, this time female, replied.

"One of them nearly lopped my head off." The voice muttered dryly. "How much 'mad' do they have to be to warrant an investigation?"

"Seal off the room then."

"They unseal it."

"They? Since when do Time-Turners know how to unseal rooms?"

"You know what I mean!" The male unspeakable blurted out. "Figgins was turned into a three years old the moment he stepped through the room! He's on aging potion to get back to his normal age, but what if he had gone and grown into an elderly ninety years old?"

"What you mean is that the Time-Turners within the room are projecting their Time-changing ability randomly." The female chided the man, who turned a sour look right back at the woman. "It's all in the specifics."

"Specifics or not, we can't seal the room."

"Show me the way," the female rolled her eyes, "I'll take care of it."

Harry merely smiled beneath his cloak. This was going to be easy.

Future-Future Harry

He eyed the Care for the Magical Creature class. Kettleburn was explaining Hippogriffs, but what he was actually staring at was another figure within the crowd. Susan Bones was chatting in small whispers with Hannah Abbott, and both seemed to be eying with a slight fright the winged beasts. His past self was close, muttering and pointing around, trying to encourage them.

"Just show them respect, and they'll treat you fine." He flinched as he hesitantly took a step backwards. It wouldn't do to warn the past-him of his presence.

"Marked by the Hallows...please tell me there isn't a prophecy about this too."

He heard the clicks of the Acromantulas' fangs and the skittering of their limbs near him. They were ready upon his command. He smiled as he gently tapped on the head of Heather with his right hand. The basilisk slowly began to uncoil as he steadied himself, using only his right side. His left arm appeared mangled, torn apart as a strange bluish light emanated from within it. He couldn't help but grit his teeth as he remembered what had happened.

He had used the Clock-Tower to get back, and he had abused the Time-Turner of Merlin. Time hadn't birthed his other selves, reality hadn't settled him into existence, and the parallel universes hadn't generated him. He was a stranger upon a strange world, and the Time-Turner had nearly torn his arm asunder. He had survived, he had managed to get back in time enough to grasp at the bone of Merlin, but now he needed a distraction.

He had the cloak of invisibility on his shoulders. He could go inside the tower with ease and silence...but his past self would probably feel that. He needed to distract him.

But what he truly needed was for people to fear him. What he needed was for people to bow to his might and strength. In the past, the flesh he inhabited had failed to show Peter's innocence, but had still been hailed a hero. He would change that, his eyes flicking to the niece of the head of the DMLE, and smiling gently. Oh yes, he remembered what had happened this day.

Now he would bring forth Chaos and Death, and the Clock-Tower would be his to claim! Nothing and nobody would stop him from achieving his goals, not even the pitiful past of himself.

"Go, my slaves." He snarled at the beasts, "Charge, in the name of your King!" And with a bellowing scream, he wielded Excalibur and charged through, the cloak shimmering as it made him invisible.

Heather slithered with speed towards the castle's tower, leaving behind the Acromantulas to fight against the students. The professors would be spread thin by then: a basilisk rampaging in the castle and the Acromantulas fighting outside the forest...they wouldn't even think him, poor little and old Arthur, to have entered the clock-tower.

Hermione Granger

Harry wasn't talking to her. Her Harry wasn't talking to her. Her beloved knight in shining armour wasn't talking to her, his princess and beloved girlfriend. She knew something was wrong with that. Harry wouldn't abandon her. She knew this had to be someone else's fault after all: Harry loved her too much to leave her alone. Lillian was probably the culprit. The skank had stopped talking to Harry and had started flirting with the Weasley bastard. She knew the Weasley were an inferior family: even Ginny had proven her dishonour.

She gritted her teeth in frustration, at the sight of Susan Bones talking with Hannah Abbott, and Harry every now and then moving in to say a few choice words. That wasn't fair! The girls were just easy flings, Harry was probably rebounding. Well, she wouldn't: her heart belonged only to Harry, and eventually the boy would understand.

He had decided to bring her to Hogsmeade in the following weekend: that had to mean something, right? It wasn't as if...as

if...as if he'd leave her there like some sort of dog abandoned on the highway, right? It didn't make sense: Harry loved her. She loved him. That was the end of the line and of the discussion. They could probably get married too: Harry was emancipated, she was guardian-less, and that closed the deal.

He could sweep her off her feet, carry her bridal style into a suite and...

Her mind wandering was abruptly stopped by screams.

She barely widened her eyes to register the source, and then she blanched as a fourth year Slytherin was literally torn to shreds by the claws of an Acromantula, while the skittering hordes of spiders literally came out in droves from within the Forbidden Forest.

"SPIDERS!" Ron Weasley screamed in fright, before running away like a coward towards the castle.

"King's men! To me!" Her Harry snarled with his wand out, as he manly pronounced the word "Ignis!" she couldn't help but shudder in pleasure. Seeing him taking charge of the escaping students, pouring hot fire over the incoming waves of creatures...she knew she had to do her part.

"Confringo!" She yelled as her own wand smashed the head of an incoming spider. "Reducto!" She added, pushing backwards half a dozen of smaller Acromantulas, that were pouncing and covering in silk a fallen student.

"Hermione! Get back here!" Harry snapped at her and she smiled sweetly: her boyfriend was talking to her once more! She knew he wouldn't stay angry at her for long!

"I'm coming!" She exclaimed back, hope filling her voice as she quickly used Diffindo to cleave in half the legs of a big spider too close to her for her tastes. As the gruesome green liquids came out of the wounded beast, she didn't even care in being covered in them, instead skittering to a halt next to her beloved.

"I'm here!" She giggled. "What do we do now, my King?"

"Is she mad?" Draco mouthed, maybe a bit too loud since she heard him, towards Tracey who merely rolled her eyes.

"Why are the spiders attacking?" Her Harry asked, his wand continuing to send a stream of fire towards the incoming hordes. "And how do we stop them?"

"Acromantulas have eight eyes, a taste for human flesh and are capable of human speech!" She retorted. "They're native to..."

"I DON'T WANT THEIR ENCYCLOPEDIA ENTRY, I WANT THEIR WEAKNESSES!" Harry roared back as a spider closed in from their sides, which Draco decapitated with...with the Trudo spell. She widened her eyes at that: Harry hadn't taught her any of his spells, and yet he had trained Draco? Draco of all people!? Draco who had even told him he was under an unbreakable vow with the Dark Lord!?

She blearily blinked away her tears, starting to sob and falling on the ground near her Harry. Harry was hers, not Draco's or Tracey's or Susan's or similar.

"My King, a retreat would be in order." Draco remarked dryly, "The Granger is having problems."

She wailed loud at that, screaming back. "I'm not The Granger! Harry! How could you!?"

"DO we really have the time!?" Tracey yelled, her wand ineffectively trying to get a few coloured spells to hit the fast spiders.

"We're going to be surrounded any moment now." Draco remarked.

"I know." Harry answered calmly. "When I give the signal, get down and close your eyes."

"Hope you know what you're doing." Draco retorted. The bastard had to know! How dared he doubt her Harry!? And Harry believed in him rather than in her!? Grief and tears left the place to a scorching anger. She wasn't going to let the ponce get his filthy hands on her boyfriend!

Harry was hers, and she would defend him!

"Red—"

"Now!" In a moment, they were all pinned on the ground as Harry's wand spun around on his fingers.

"Caecumflagro!"

A blinding white light soon encompassed them, followed by the loud wails of the spiders who probably found themselves blinded. The next instant, the word "Sectumsempra!" soon followed, and Hermione gritted her teeth as she heard the flesh of the spiders cut and broken, their bodies falling on the ground as they wailed their last breaths.

Within moments, she opened her eyes again, taking in the scene of the spiders on their backs, their torn limbs twitching upwards as Harry's wand spun quickly, giving the deathblow to the dark beasts. She wobbled on her feet, as Draco blearily stood up next.

She spun on her feet to where the Malfoy heir was, her wand still clutched in her hand. She couldn't kill him now: this didn't mean she wouldn't kill him eventually. How dared he try and become a better friend to Harry than her? How dared he learn from Harry his spells? How dared he even think to doubt the words of her beloved!?

He would pay.

Dearly.

Then her gaze went to where her Harry was, and the bubbling hatred and anger she held within herself suddenly spiked, the inner screaming she wanted to do increased, and then abruptly it all disappeared. Only a cold, calculative gaze remained behind. No longer even showing the murderous intent behind her brown eyes...

Only indifference, furious indifference, shone through.

And that was never a good sign.

Harry Potter

On the plus side, they were all alive. On the negative side, the visit to a mind healer became more and more pressing for Hermione. He couldn't drop the girl, not even after everything she had already done to him. The girl needed healing, not a tongue lashing. She needed to be treated urgently, before her delusions had the time to grow into something extremely dangerous...like what had happened a few minutes before.

He wobbled close to where a cocooned form lay, and with a careful Diffindo, the silk was cut. Gasping for air, Susan emerged from within with a pale face and tears in her eyes. She looked at him as if she was seeing some sort of mythological hero, at least he hoped that was the case because he felt like hell had rolled over him, and then jumped to hug him. He huffed at the body tackle, before slowly cradling the crying girl.

"I was...I was...I was scared," She sniffled. "I thought I was going to die!"

"It's all right." He soothingly replied. "Everything's all right."

"Where's Hannah?" Susan whispered, her eyes widening as she slowly stumbled on her feet. He was quickly up too, holding the girl as the paralyzing venom within the Acromantula's silk made her woozy. Luckily no-one had been bitten, because he doubted he had enough bezoars for everyone within his pockets. His eyes scanned around, before settling on another cocoon near them. This one, however, held the signs of having been 'punctured' by an Acromantula's fangs.

He ran towards it, his wand already cutting away the strands as his hands grabbed and pulled out the cold body of Hannah Abbott. He gritted his teeth as his left hand fumbled for a bezoar, before plopping it within the mouth of the girl.

The blood loss on the other hand...he shuddered for a second, before turning to a worried Susan who was paling in fright at the sight of her friend in those conditions.

"This is going to make her scream." He pointed out, before whipping his wand out and pointing it at the wound.

In that precise instant, a show of sparks and flames came together with the crying sound of a phoenix...

Author's notes

Phew. University hates my guts. The Daily updates will probably become bi-daily or tri-daily. That said yes, Professor Graham= Hermione Granger from the future. Yes, Hermione is going down the deep end.

How much deep? Imagine...School Days deep. (Anime. Look it up but be careful because it's squeamish.) If it was not understood 'future' Hermione barely waited out of the secret entrance near the Ravenclaw dormitory, when Harry opened the way but then was stopped by Present-Hermione, she slipped in and caught them by surprise.

And you did see the twins. Didn't you? Just you wait until they become a central part of another book...

Harry Wylt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter 13

The aftermath of the Acromantula's assault was met with a fierce tongue lashing from Professor McGonagall, a removal of fifty points from each of their houses, and a subsequent addition of one hundred points each for having saved the potential victims from certain death. Harry didn't actually feel what he had done to be of any importance, since it seemed the norm for him to enter the fray when there was trouble.

He had the nagging feeling that he was forgetting something else completely, something tied to the event by itself. It was as the Headmaster ordered the others to leave his office, but for him to remain, that he understood what the problem was. The Headmaster was probably suspecting he had something to do with it, maybe to earn more favour from the students he had saved?

"Mister Potter," Albus began calmly. "I thought we had an understanding."

There was silence, as the old wizard spoke with his hands clasped together. "So why was a Basilisk within the halls?"

He blinked, his eyes widening in surprise. "A Basilisk?" it couldn't be Heather. Snape had the...Snape didn't have to keep the snake safe. Snape could pretty much care less about her: but he could not awaken the basilisk without parseltongue, right? It was impossible...unless it was him. He felt sick. He wouldn't do that to Heather, would he? Clearly, Albus was talking about another basilisk. Maybe he had bred another? Maybe Voldemort himself had entered the school with one of his own?

"Indeed," Albus nodded grimly. The man's right hand moved to caress his white beard, and as he did that, the black jewel mounted on the ring shone briefly. Harry tensed, as he felt the invisibility cloak stir as if she was awakening like a slumbering animal. "Interesting," the Headmaster of Hogwarts murmured, locking his eyes to Harry's own gaze.

"It seems I might require the Invisibility cloak, for further studies...of course, should it fail to be presented I just might have to make it

widely known that a Basilisk attacked the school once more. I might lose my post, but thankfully, the basilisk withheld in a safe location will no longer be a problem..." the man's voice trailed off, as his ice-blue eyes narrowed on Harry.

"I don't have the Invisibility cloak, Headmaster." Harry replied, averting his gaze and staring at the desk and the sherbet lemons. Had the old wizard not eaten even one of those?

"Then it appears we are at an impasse. Thankfully the presence of a conjured rooster was enough to take care of the problem." With those words, Harry tensed slightly. His hands began to clench as he lowered his gaze.

"So the basilisk is already dead?" he asked, not trusting his voice to come out cracked.

"Indeed."

"I see." Harry stood up quietly, turning towards the door. He took a few steps, but then Albus' voice reached him once more, forcing him to turn his head.

"Mister Potter," the old wizard began calmly, "you will learn with time that sacrifices, for the Greater Good, are to be made. When that day will come, maybe you'll realize that all along, you and I have been fighting for the same side."

"I don't think so, Headmaster. Every life is precious." Gellert's words sounded odd, pronounced by his mouth, but he said them all the same. He wondered what the other old wizard would do in his place...probably fling a heavy and dark curse at the Headmaster of Hogwarts.

"For now, maybe," Dumbledore acquiesced, "but you are still young. Time will tell. It always does."

Not if I have my way with it first. Harry bitterly thought as he stormed out of there, his feet hitting against the floor sharply as he walked the familiar corridors of Hogwarts. His future-self had mounted an attack against Hogwarts, using the Basilisk as a distraction and a sacrificial tool. How could he do that? How could he just sacrifice Heather for something like this? He could have walked with the

invisibility cloak. He could have avoided using Heather altogether, yet he hadn't.

That however meant that his future-self had a Time-Turner of sorts. Otherwise, how could he go back in time? He had to ask Hermione where Time-Turners normally were. He would probably steal one eventually, explaining why he had gone back in time...but not why he would choose to sacrifice Heather.

Was this because time could not be changed? Or was there something he didn't know? Had Dumbledore lied? He needed to see Heather with his own eyes...if only he still had the Marauder's map, he could at least see where the Headmaster would end up going after his office hours, follow him and find out where the corpse was. Maybe it was another Basilisk. It didn't have to be Heather. It couldn't be her. It couldn't. It wouldn't. It was not possible. She wouldn't follow anyone but him.

He wouldn't sacrifice her.

He would not sacrifice her.

But he had, had he not?

The sob in his throat came out as a hiccup first. He blinked his eyes, opening the closest door that thankfully led to an empty classroom. He closed it with a sharp push, before walking towards the opposite wall of the dusty room and bringing both hands to hold him up. He gasped for air as his eyes stung. Strength left his limbs as he fell on the ground, the desire to cry trying desperately to be squashed.

The first tear fell down on the ground like a drop of rain, soon followed by a second and a third. There was no screaming, only the silent tears he was letting down. A soft weight settled on his shoulder a moment later, and he shuddered as he felt a small amount of warmth pool inside of him. The soft head of Sophie nuzzled against his cheek, her tongue cleaning his hair gently.

"What have I done?" he whispered throatily. "What have I done?"

To that question, he had no answer.

He had no choice. He had no choice but to pretend to be a warrior with no fear. He had no choice but to pretend to be a King who had no doubts. He had no choice...

And yet he wondered, and as he did he kept on praying that somebody would take the choices for him, that someone would grant him freedom from the shackles of fate and the chains that bind him to the destiny of the prophecies. How he wished for someone to break them. How he wished...

For freedom.

Professor Graham

The necklace was gone. She hesitated before checking once more in her room. She had Accio-ed it repeatedly. She had screamed out its synonyms, its various appellatives, even trying to call it 'Harry's gift' or similar. It hadn't worked. Her necklace was gone. It had disappeared. It wasn't there.

It had to be there.

It was meant to be there.

Where could it have gone? It wasn't possible. She should have disappeared if history had changed. She was ready for that. Why was she still there, when the necklace wasn't? Why was she...

The Time-Turner of Merlin whirled and trembled, its tremors increasing for a slight moment, before it suddenly stopped. She widened her eyes in surprise as she removed it from her robe's pocket. As soon as she touched it, it briefly flashed of a pure blue light, before dying out. The circles and the sandglass within the Turner were now spinning, as if somebody was setting time back.

For what reason?

What had changed? Had her presence brought forth something it wasn't meant to bring? Had something happened that she hadn't known of? Why wasn't she sporting the necklace? The necklace was meant to be hers. It was the proof Harry had cared for her, proof he wanted only to help her achieve her own greatness not as his shadow but as his friend, and then as his lover. He had promised

her his love, if only she had gone through those meetings with a mind healer...

If only she had.

She hadn't now, if this was of any indication.

But if Harry didn't bring her to Hogsmeade, then the Hermione of this time wouldn't realize her problems, she wouldn't heal...it had Harry who had saved her from madness once...

But if he didn't save her, then where did that leave her? Was the Time-Turner of Merlin the only reason she wasn't affected by the Clock-Tower?

The Clock-Tower...it had to be its effects. Somebody had entered, but it wasn't yet time! Time wasn't meant to change so quickly, so fast. She had until the end of summer, at least! She knew Harry had aged thrice in a single year...she knew her Harry had seemed more mature, more charismatic after nothing more than a single year but now...

Now she was in uncharted lands, and that scared her. She was meant to disappear as soon as the change she brought was sufficient, to remain beyond that...

That wasn't possible. It wasn't meant to be.

She had to enter the clock-tower.

It was the only way.

Future-Harry Potter

Fiendfyre burned nicely. The violet flames desired only to burn, and as long as he gave them fuel, they would burn and obey his command: they were like termites, feasting upon an ocean of wood. The Unspeakables screamed as the flames latched on to their limbs, burning through them to leave behind nothing, not even the bones or the ashes. Yet he stood there, in the middle of the flames...and he felt no heat, nor did they seek to burn him too.

The Invisibility cloak shone in a glittering silver colour, looking as liquid as the sparkling ocean under a moonlight. He chuckled as he brought his wand up, flicking the flames to attack the door, the sands, the walls, the survivors and all that was around him in a tornado of fire and death. Then, nothing remained afterwards.

He sighed in relief. The Time-Turners were now gone. The only one that remained was hidden within his cloak. The only one that mattered was his and his alone. Maybe a few aurors still had a few of the devices lingering around, maybe on their persons...but he'd find them soon enough.

He spun around, disappearing with a sharp crack as the feeling of disappearance made him nauseous while he travelled through space towards his destination. Hogsmeade was intact: a refreshing change from the time he had seen it before his first turning of the clock. He wondered...had the spiders attacked yet? Had he saved Susan, the girl who would grant him a powerful leverage on the head of the DMLE? Had he already learned of Sirius' sickness, for having meddled in things not meant for him?

No, he probably hadn't heard of the last one yet. He walked down the cellars of Honeydukes, invisible and silent. The secret passage was bringing him back fond memories...the meeting, the betrayal, the fight...He shuddered as he recalled Draco staying behind, holding the line. He climbed the circular steps that had been destroyed and melted beyond recognition by Fiendfyre.

He opened the passage and slid into the hallways of Hogwarts. He wondered, how long until it all came to an end? How long until the decisions of youth brought it all down? He gaze at the paintings, and smiled sadly as he recalled them all burned and singed.

The screams of the students as the spells of the Aurors bled them dry echoed in his ears. He had done his best, he had fought against the best...but he had lost. They had reached for him as he made his last stand within the dining hall; they had bled and kept on bleeding as he used everything he had...

And because of that, the wards had come down.

How stupid had he been, really, to remove the shackles of the beast by himself?

One should never tickle a sleeping dragon, but the phrase never referred to the beast beneath the castle, no. It referred to another dragon, one whose entire being had been split and maddened to the point beyond recognition. One that had grown with the weakening of the wards, the addition of the founders' souls...and everything else that had come together with it.

He would end this. One way or another, he would change everything.

Tick-Tock, goes the clock.

Tick-Tock, it cannot stop.

Time and time again you try,

Time and time again you die.

He opened the door to the third corridor, stepping in and taking a deep calming breath as his eyes scanned something he had never seen before, during the first time.

The corpse of Heather stood there, rotting and being dismembered piece by piece by the members of the staff. He closed his eyes shut for a moment, the feeling of disgust and the desire of retching piling up, settling in his throat and just waiting for him to open his mouth and let it all out. He gulped it back down with a grimace, clenching his right fist over his chest as he watched a couple of Goblins bring forth a few wagons, to collect the fangs.

He stepped aside, letting the noise of the creatures' pickaxes drown his steps towards the end of the corridor, where the door for the Clock-Tower stood.

The Pendulum swung itself in the grounds, but it was on the third floor that access was granted to the mechanisms. He quietly entered the open door, closing it behind him without making a sound. The clicks of the gears around him produced a cacophony of noise that could not be silenced. Upon a floor of stone, copper railings prevented those who walked above them from falling to their deaths, as the gears spun around.

"Tick-Tack, goes the clock." A voice remarked from a corner of the room. "It's not yet your time."

"Tock-Tick. Tick-Tock. Tack-Tick. Tick-Tick-Tock." The voice added a moment later. "No, not yet, you should try again. But you won't. You believe you can? You can't defeat me, you know? It's an impossible task." The voice whispered now to his ear, "I went through what you're doing now, little me." It added with a mocking tone as Harry felt himself being pushed forward, to crash against the stone wall in front of him.

"Everything is boring, after you repeat it for infinity!" the voice snarled, two jets of orange and red bursting forth from thin air and aimed at him. He recalled his wits a second before they clashed against him, rolling to his side as his wand came out, Excalibur firmly formed.

"Oh yes...Yes...We aren't there yet are we? We still need to break the sword!" The voice chuckled, it laughed as the air seemed to part ways to reveal his face, twin red eyes staring at him with a feral gleam.

"How did—"

"The problem is not how, Harry dear." His future-self shook his head as it brought up his free hand to make a 'no-no' gesture. "It's not even the when that matters. It's not what and it's not why...the question you should ask doesn't even require who, you know?"

There was silence, except for the clicks of the gears above their heads.

"The question you should ask... it starts with a will."

Future-Harry chuckled. "Yes, a will you kindly tell me what's going on? To which I will answer with a no, but I'll keep you alive, Harry. I need you after all. One has to go back and kill, another has to go back and be killed, and the third one? Well the third one gets to grab all the spoils of the world! And you can't do anything about it! Nothing at all! There's no other way! The third one wins by doing nothing, always had and always will...and you don't get to choose." The Future-Harry snarled, as he took a step forward.

"I am your King, past-me, for I rule over Britain, Europe and the whole wide world...whether they know it now or will discover it lately, I do not care. Do we understand each other, Harry Potter!? Back in time with you, save the world! Save it from the destruction I will bring! Save it and save yourself at the same time...or so you are going to—"

"Trudo!" the spell departed Harry's wand with fury, the flaming tips of the lances ablaze as they sailed an arc in the air to reach for his enemy. A flick of his future-self wand, and the lances redirected themselves against the sides of the room, crashing against the wall and detonating. Tongues of fire morphed into flame hands, as his future-self silently flung them back at him.

"Glacius!" the jet of ice and freezing wind blew through the hands of fire, coming from his left hand. Silently, his future-self just grinned, before twisting his wand and making a half-circle motion. A dozen of twirling spheres of grey departed, as the Moleo spell flung itself multiple times at him.

The first he dodge, ducking down as it sailed harmlessly above him. Moving to the side with a quick pace, he jumped downwards, past the copper railing. He twisted in mid-air, firing off a high-powered and silent Reducto at the stone floor of the Clock-Tower.

The spell struck the floor, tearing it apart as the chunks of stone began to fall. The gears clanked as some loosened from their sockets, falling downwards together with the upper floor. He twisted his body again, slowing his descent as he pierced the sides of the room with Excalibur, to stop in mid-air leaving a deep gash within the wall.

His future-self was nowhere to be seen, but he couldn't lower his guard.

"And here we go!" the cheerful tone came together with a flash of light, as a gold hilted sword crashed hardly against the blade of Excalibur.

Harry's eyes widened, as for a second he looked straight into the face of his future-self, the crazed eyes, the feral smile, and the way it held the sword like a cleaver. Then, he heard the sound of a crack.

"Not done yet!?" his future-self roared, laughing as it made force against the sword embedded into the wall and flew upwards, landing with his feet on the surface of the wall, as if gravity didn't mean anything to him.

The Future-him pointed his sword at him, not Excalibur, no, something else.

"This, my dear past self, is the sword that cannot be cut." His future-self jumped down then, charging along the wall with a ferocious scream, pushing his sword in a swiping motion.

In that moment, Harry pulled the sword free and barely brought it up to parry the hit.

"We already did this!" his future-self snarled. "I know all that you will do, all that you will think!"

They began to fall downwards, his future-self pressing on with wide swings as he barely managed to deflect them. The ground grew closer, and Excalibur seemed to cry with every crack that appeared on its surface.

"You will lose, Harry! Accept the truth, and kneel to your fate!"

The pendulum swung then, a single movement that brought the metal bar to crash against Harry's back, sending him against the wall. His future-self narrowed his eyes, as the pendulum swung again, this time twisting itself.

"It's not yet the time." Harry heard his future-self murmur, as his body stilled in mid-air, sword in hand.

"What changed?" he heard him murmur.

"WHO CHANGED SOMETHING!?" it screamed, the wall outright cracking the very walls of Hogwarts.

Harry took that chance. He took that moment to fiddle with the Time-Turner in his pocket. He yanked the chain as he gasped for air, for the breath that seemed to be lacking him. He felt the taste of blood in his throat. He was just about to spin it, when a sharp voice cracked at him.

"Accio Time-Turner!" and the contraption flew from his hands into those of his future-self, there was a soft growl.

"Where did you take this?" it growled. "Wait...you didn't use it to go back in time, to get out of the ministry did you?" it suddenly asked. "WHERE DID YOU TAKE THIS!?"

He blinked, not understanding what his future-self was saying...until the pendulum swung again, and a second pendulum appeared out of thin air.

"No, no, no! NO. Where is it!? Where the hell..." the Future-Him was frantically looking through his cloak, as if searching for something. "WHERE IS YOUR TIME-TURNER, WHAT IS THIS!?"

And Harry understood what the Future-Him was saying.

The Time-Turner he had was one he had nicked from the room, before destroying all the others. He had replaced it, since the previous one had been lost. And his future-self was instead acting as if he was supposed to have it.

Now that he didn't...then it meant that his future-self was no longer...

"ICO!" he roared the hail of spells thrown at his future-self, who brought his sword hastily up, erecting a shield that was chipped away by the flurry of the piercing magic.

"Stop this! Stop! No! You don't get it; without the Turner the key lacks—"

And the pendulum swung again, splitting in three as it began to hit against the walls themselves.

"Ignis! Trudo! GRAIUSFYRE!"

"AVADA KEDAVRA!" the moment his future-self pronounced that spell, he instinctively brought forth Excalibur to protect himself.

And in that moment, the sword that was already cracked...exploded.

The shrapnel of the sword blew and cut through him without resistance, tearing apart his chest, his bones, his lungs, his inner organs, smashing through all that he had and not stopping, not even as it reached the nearby wall.

He was going to die, and it wasn't going to be painless either...

But if he died there and then...

His Future-self screamed as it flew towards him, his body strangely ethereal as if something was hovering half within and half outside him.

"NO!"

And then the door of the third floor opened, and the pendulums stilled, returning to one as if nothing had happened. Professor Graham's head passed through, staring in awe at the destruction within the room while both Harry, down below, looked upwards with perplexity.

And in that moment, in that precise moment, his Future-self eyes shone with a glint of murder and malice that he never believed he could possess.

"So the bitch is responsible." It growled. It couldn't be him, that thing that held his skin couldn't be him. It held him with both arms, but his gaze was distracted from whoever was up above, on the third floor. Harry's vision was turning blurry, but as he held the cracked remains of Excalibur that slowly turned itself into a half-singed wand...he closed his eyes and exhaled.

He was going to die. The hate, the pure hatred he felt for this was something that he channelled against himself. He hated himself, he hated what he had become, he hated all the things he had done and all the people he had betrayed and sacrificed...and in that moment of hate, he understood what it meant when the other him had said to kill his past self.

Well, time had changed, and so would his choice.

"Hey," he whispered, the tip of his wand pressed against the chest of his future-self. "Avada Kedavra." Point-blank, the killing curse, already unblockable, was unstoppable as it hit its mark.

He had expected a silent thud and then both of them falling to their deaths. Somebody should have warned him about the explosion.

Really, somebody should have.

Harry Potter

The dazzling lights of the ministry ballroom made him pale. As he stepped through the doorway, the light cast from small circular fires around the walls seemed to centre on him, announcing his arrival. Linked to his arm, dressed in a beautiful and sparkling grey dress, was Hermione. The girl's hair had been let down in curls, reaching her bare shoulders. She was smiling, brightly so, and her hazel eyes seemed to sparkle as she held gently onto him.

She looked like a kid in a candy store, or like a scholar in a library: happy enough to burst. The girl was wearing a pair of satin white gloves, courtesy of an old grandmother on his father's side. A small podium had been conjured on one side, and the crowd already gathered parted its way to let the couple pass. As Harry neared the wooden steps that would lead him on the podium, he unlinked Hermione's arm, letting the girl walk towards his family who stood in a corner.

His father was proudly beaming at him, while his mother had tears in her eyes. His sister...his sister wasn't there. There had been talks in school of how she had been found, half-naked, in a broom closet together with the Weasley boy by Professor Graham. Rita Skeeter had literally written a ground-breaking article that had shattered whatever light hope of 'the Girl-Who-Whores-Herself' to be forgotten.

He walked the steps that would lead to the minister, who was already standing there, with a smile on his face. The medal was held by the hands of Cornelius, who seemed eager to just get it over with. He was halfway through the stage, when a slow rumbling noise echoed through the room.

He blinked, stopping on his track. The Prime Minister looked at him perplexed, while Albus Dumbledore within the crowd frowned,

before narrowing his eyes and turning to stare at the entrance of the hall. Soon, the rest of the wizards and witches veered to stare at the doorway too, some trying to lift themselves on their toes to have a better look at what was going on.

Clad in a sparkling grey cloak, a silver and gold mask and wearing a black robe, Duke Wyllt appeared at the doorstep. He widened his eyes: Draco was supposed to polyjuice like him midway through the ball, not at the beginning and certainly not like his Duke Wyllt persona!

"Albus Dumbledore!" The voice spoke loudly and clearly. "I claimed Hogwarts as mine in public, as the laws of rightful succession dictate! Hereby I order you out of the castle, and the board of governors disbanded! Let it be known that the castle of Hogwarts is once more under the rightful guide of one of its heirs! Let it be known and so mote it be!" Then with loud a pop, the fake Duke Wyllt disappeared from the scene, leaving behind the surprised pureblood nobles and the paparazzi who had been present at the scene.

He frowned, rather than be surprised like the rest of the room.

Draco was not able to use apparition, and the boy was still standing in the corner representing the Malfoy family, and he too was puzzled and looking at him with curiosity, Ginny linked to his arm.

His hand went by instinct to the Time-Turner, only to end up with nothing in his grasp. If he hadn't been the one to do this... then who could have? His gaze went to Hermione, who seemed to simply be smiling warmly at him. His heart clenched at that sight. He didn't want to fall for the smile, but he was starting to believe that maybe he was overreacting.

Sure, the girl had —nearly— broken down during the middle of a fight with giant spiders, but it was something normal. A thirteen year old shouldn't be expected to mount and hold a first line of defence against beasts worth five X's of danger. They were expected to run screaming. He had remained in some sort of twisted sense of Gryffindorish bravado. The smart thing would have been to retreat.

If he had done that however, Susan Bones wouldn't be smiling at him shyly from the side of the room, her aunt pursing her lips tightly

and staring at him like a tiger ready to pounce on the prey. If he had run, then Hannah Abbott wouldn't be alive and enjoying a warm cup of whatever non-alcoholic beverage the buffet offered.

But if he had run...then Heather would still be alive. If he had run back in the castle, then maybe he would have managed to save his friend. If he had run, or if he still had held the Time-Turner. He was going to get another one soon. Taking one from the room within the ministry would require a bit of planning, but maybe after his speech he could manage to talk with an Unspeakable. Hermione had told him everything she knew on the Time-Turners, and he just had to get the right moment...

"Well now, order in the room!" Cornelius Fudge exclaimed, pointing his wand to his own throat to evoke a Sonorus charm. The room had degenerated into excited buzzes of conversation regarding the behaviour of the Duke, who had barely passed by and then disappeared within the next instant. Albus Dumbledore looked torn between going elsewhere and remaining for his speech, and Harry sort of knew the old wizard wanted to make sure he would play by their strings.

How wrong they were.

"I am sure we all would like to talk more about Duke Wyllt, but at the present we still have to hear Mister Potter's words! He is being granted the highest honour conferred by the International Conference of Warlocks: the order of Merlin, first rank! Certainly we should all hear out his words of encouragement and maybe a few choice words on the horrendous behaviour that Mister Wyllt seems to possess?"

The last part had been barely whispered to his ears, as he had been given the stage in the place of the man. Harry brought up his own wand, pointing it at his throat as he murmured the incantation Sonorus. As the charm took place, he coughed slightly to make sure it actually worked as intended.

"Well..." he began calmly, "I can say that it is an honour to receive the Order of Merlin, the medal that was awarded to those whose ideals and actions would benefit the muggle world over the magical one. It was after all the product of muggle technology that brought

forth the Bismarck and the Tirpitz, the two ships with whom I stalled and defeated Salazar's navy."

"Mister Potter!" a journalist exclaimed suddenly, "What about the French navy or the ministry? Are they not worthy of consideration?"

"I would like to claim they managed to successfully stall the advance of Salazar..." he sighed, "But that is simply not true." Cornelius was now moving, slowly but surely taking out his wand. In that moment, he smiled. "Had they truly wished to stall Salazar then they would have opened their doors to the advancement of the muggles! All the people who died fighting Salazar died in vain! They could have been saved, had we merged the magical and the muggle world centuries ago! Salazar wouldn't have been able to even set foot in the channel, had we even looked at what a mere modern warship can do. Those people, those aurors...they died in vain because you could not see the future advance, the future that can only come by accepting the muggles' ideas as our own!"

There was a moment of silence, probably of shock of the assembled wizards and witches, as Cornelius brought his wand upwards to cast a Sonorus on himself, but in that moment...

Chaos erupted from the sides of the ballroom, as the howling of dogs soon met with the sound of hooves hitting against the hard ground. Through the walls, as if they were made of nothing but air, the Wild Hunt rode forward. A thin mist came from their group, as a few witches screamed and a couple of young girls actually fainted in fright.

"Heir of WYLLT!" their leader said with a sword in his hand. "We come for you!"

The hounds, their colour crimson red and with teeth caked in dried blood, barked out as they angrily pushed the people within the ballroom to a corner. The spells cast by the aurors passed through the ghostly creatures without even making them flinch. Harry kept silent, slowly taking his wand out and moving to reach the side of the stage.

The hellhounds barked and snarled, their growls savagely assaulting the ears of the onlookers with their high pitches.

And in that moment, as Albus Dumbledore brought up his own wand, the Resurrection Stone shone brightly upon the old man's finger.

"If ghosts are needed to fight ghosts...if echoes are needed to fight echoes..." Albus remarked with steel in his voice, "then so be it."

And when the ghosts began to appear, chaos and pandemonium erupted within the hall.

Gellert Grindelwald

He heard a scream, coming from far, far above, but he didn't bother with it. The Furies had probably found another prey, or their screams just came around to disturb him. He couldn't be bothered in that moment, and thus paid no attention.

He was talking to Adolf. The man was standing, with a set of heavy manacles at his hands and feet, on a sheet of ice. Behind him, a wall of thick ice barred the passage towards the exit. He at least hoped it was the exit, because he was starting to feel the thirst and the hunger. Eating corpses was never a nice thing, and drinking blood was utterly disgusting. Yet to survive...

It was always a matter of survival. To pass beyond the last threshold, he would need to confront all of the people he had betrayed, one by one, and pass through as a 'changed' man. Like Scrooge of Dickens, he was meant to view this as a learning experience, but unlike him he was starting to grow tired and angry.

This wasn't hell, but a construction built with magic. Towards the end the magic was already starting to deteriorate, and it was now the third time that Adolf repeated the same sentence. He could do nothing but let him speak again and again in his German high-pitched voice about how he should repent of his sins.

Whoever was the architect of this place, he would make sure to destroy him completely the moment he stepped outside.

Of that, he was sure.

Author's notes

This chapter was extremely difficult, and yet extremely easy, to write. Future-Future Harry and Future-Harry seemingly offed each other, but if they did that, then how could a Future-Harry come back in time to try and kill past-harry, just to later be killed by a 'present'-Harry?

The Time-Turner changes.

When they met with Merlin in Stonehenge, Future-Harry and Future-Future Harry both had the Merlin's Time-Turner. Yet, while Future-Future Harry had so many 'memories' of repeating a 'cycle' he didn't bother to check for changes. Future-Harry instead did, and so he nicked a normal Time-Turner from the ministry. Which later translated in Future-Future Harry having a normal Time-Turner rather than Merlin's one...

And Chaos ensued.

Time-Travel has many views...but the generally accepted one in Canon Harry is that you can't change the perspective of events from happening, but the rest is fair game.

To make an example: Harry uses Expecto Patronum to remove one hundred Dementors from his past-self and Sirius.

In the 'first timeline' Harry wasn't saved by a future version of himself, but by SOMEONE else. (Like Snape, to make an example) Then when he used the time turner for the first time, the time-turning thing swapped 'Snape's' actions with Harry's, and thus Harry saved himself.

Perspective doesn't change 'Harry is saved by blurry figure' because the final result is the same. 'Harry lives'.

Which brings us to the most dreadful question 'ever'.

What the hell is going on right now?

Well *takes a deep breath*.

Start— Finish. Normal, unaltered, Time-Turner free event.

Start—Time-Turner—Start with Time-Turner self— 1st) Time-Turner, 2nd)Proceeds to Finish keeping perspective intact.

Start—Time-Turner of Merlin—Start with no laws.

This means that the Future-self can kill the present-self, but then would have to take his place to avoid the destruction of the Time-Line. At the same time, since they can 'alter' things, the changes reflect upon their future-self after the event takes place, not before. So they won't know they 'lost' something, until their present self actually does.

The 'merging' is expressed by the viewing of memories. However, in certain areas, time exists unilaterally. (The Clock-Tower negates the memory-merging effect as shown) because in there 'things exist' and that's that. There is no time-space continuum. It's a Klein bottle to say something sort-of smartish.

Time however changed. Something made a change in the Time-line that was meant to be fixed and eternally 'in loop' by thus bringing to an end Future-Future Harry and Future-Harry at the same time.

Consequences will be dire, as breaking the Time-Line and Time itself...

Not agreeable. Not smart. Extremely bad idea.

For a sort of idea of what 'Time-change' we're talking about, there was this game for pc out, that had you protagonist flung back in time by a mistake, you saved a man from a burning laboratory and next thing you know, you're forced to choose whether to kill yourself to avoid the rise of a megalomaniac time-ruling dictator or not. (The man you saved will later become a mad scientist and rise to power)

By 'erasing the slate' you awake in the chopper, going back home, with no memory of what happened because those events 'never existed in the first place'.

Well, the 'never existed in the first place' is something I consider wrong. Events have happened. They exist. Thus they don't simply lie down and die without fighting. To erase the slate...to start again from the beginning...who says we wouldn't be doing the same mistakes again?

That said, there is a reason things are complicated right at the beginning of this 'book'. Because so I won't have to tediously do every Harry's perspective further down the road. You know how it seems to end now, the question is 'how did it go there?'

And to that, Professor Graham will answer forward in the book.

Harry Wyllt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter 14

The Leader of the Hunt smiled, as the Resurrection Stone shone. Harry's eyes widened as the ghostly figures of the Wild Hunt slowly morphed into flesh and bones, the tendrils of the mist receding. Then, with a fluid movement, the gaunt looking man descended from his infernal horse as the hellhounds whined and whimpered, their bodies turning to ash.

"Thank you for the thoughtful gift, old man." The sword in the leader's hand now shone with its golden form, no longer pale and ghastly.

"Impossible." The word whispered by the headmaster of Hogwarts echoed into the room, as more and more of the men among the Wild Hunt descended from their horses, returning to their bodies as the stone did not seem to stop shining.

"What do you think the stone's power is, fool?" the leader sneered, "A gift to see the dead? A chance to call them forth? The stone is a key that opens a door," the man's left hand opened up gently, as the stone's colour turned crimson, "a door to the realm of the dead."

"Go back then! I am the stone's master!" Albus exclaimed, holding onto his hand as he let out a fearsome scream of pain. The smell of burnt flesh filled the ballroom, as under the shocked and watchful gaze of the presents, the defeater of Grindelwald screamed as his hand caught on fire.

"No, you are not." The Leader of the Hunt whispered. "You do not have the blood to call you such. You do not have the power to define yourself as one. You lack all that is needed...and I will make sure no-one else may claim it again." The gaunt figure breathed in once, before exhaling and whispering. "How wonderful is the taste of fresh air...how long since the last time I smelt burned flesh."

A slosh sound made itself known as Dumbledore chopped his own hand with his wand, letting it fall on the ground and explode in cinders and ashes.

Holding onto his lopped limb, the old wizard's beard was stained red by the blood gushing out.

"What strength has a wizard whose wand is taken?" the figure spoke again. His eyes shone of emerald, and his hair turned black. "What life has a man, if all he holds dear is removed?" he whispered then, the sword in his hand twirling with a well precise motion.

"None," with that word whispered, the sword came crashing down on Dumbledore's shoulders. The sword sliced through the skin and the bones, cutting in half the figure of the headmaster of Hogwarts as both sides fell on the ground with a sickening thud. Then the figure turned to look at the silent assembly.

"Wizards and Witches!" he exclaimed, his voice resounding crisp and clear as the blade stained in blood was still unsheathed in his hand. "Deliver onto me the Heir of Wyllt, and I shall grant you respite! Deliver onto me my curser's heir and your life will be spared! Refuse..." the tip of his sword touched the resurrection stone that shone as the ethereal figure of Dumbledore appeared, its face seemingly writhe in pain.

"And your very own souls will be forfeited."

The sword swept in front of the leader of the Hunt, and the spirit, or maybe the soul, of Albus Dumbledore was no more. All in all, it seemed rather anti-climactic. No battle of spells, no flurry of blows exchanged. Only speech and few precise motions had taken down the defeated of Grindelwald.

He's still alive. Harry's eyes widened before narrowing down.

Horcruxes, Hermione? The soft whisper to his ears sounded like music, but he knew it did not belong to him. It wasn't from anywhere close to him, and yet he could hear it.

Remnant of a future that has long gone away, time broken cannot be repaired!

What was that scream? Harry winced before his eyes met with those of the leader of the hunt. Had the man really no idea of who he was? How could he not?

The Invisibility Cloak hid its user from Death itself. The man was looking for him, but he would not find him. He could not. He could look for his voice, for his words, but he could not look for him. He could not look at him. Like in First Year...the compulsion.

He felt an arm encircle his own, and the slight pull made him snap his eyes to the source. Hermione was silently biting her lip as she pulled him away, into the background and out of the chaos that was bound to happen. She shouldn't have done that.

Movement caught the attention of the huntsmen, who turned their gazes onwards the stage.

She just wanted to help.

Why was he actually trying to justify this?

The girl's eyes widened as she realized her mistake.

Too late.

Harry's wand rose deftly in his hand as he took a deep breath.

"Trudo!" ethereal lances burst forward from the crowd of wizards, aimed at the hunt. The huntsmen smiled—their smirks were feral as they believed the attack to pass through and leave them unscathed. The lances' tips coloured them of greyish mist as they landed with crunching sounds against the chests and the armour of the enemy. Blood, dark and nearly black, emerged from the wounds as a few fell on the ground, their bodies turned to stone and dust.

"Who dares!?" the leader of the Hunt screeched. Hermione pulled Harry's hand stronger this time, as the distraction bought them time to get down from the stage, closer to the corner where his family was standing grimly.

Why isn't anyone else attacking?

Wizards feared little, magic always did grant them more than they could possibly obtain. When something however came that struck them as fearful, they recoiled and froze. It was the only possible way for how Voldemort had managed to rise to power in Britain by

himself. Sure, he had help from Werewolves, Vampires and Giants, but if Wizardry society had fought him...

Many of the witches in the ballroom were devoid of wands, preferring ball dresses, and of those who had a wand... a lot hadn't used it for much more than cleansing one's own mansion every now and then, when boredom struck. Those who could fight, the aurors and the ministry workers, were all in wait of an order from Cornelius Fudge, who was instead silent and still on the stage.

Harry was hugged by his fearful mother the moment he stepped into the corner, the woman's arms encircling him as she tightened her hold on him. Maybe she feared he would disappear again.

The crowd departed, to show holding his wand none other than Draco Malfoy. Slightly behind him was the pale-faced Ginny, clutching her own wand.

"Who are you? What right do you have, to wield what does not belong to you?" the leader of the hunt asked. His voice was slow and calm as he took a single step forward.

"I...I am Draco Malfoy," the pale blond boy replied. His right hand held the wand tightly, as he slowly exhaled. "And I won't go down without a fight."

"You are but a distraction, Malfoix," the creature said, taking another step forward. A slight chill permeated the room, as the leader of the hunt took one more step, his breath condensing into clouds. "You are nothing but a pathetic excuse. Where is Wyllt, Malfoix? Is he here, in this room? I cannot sense him: does he possess the cloak then? The Cloak that hides? I will find him, Malfoix. If I have to kill all those around us I will..." the figure whispered, another step bringing it closer.

"I know what you hold cannot belong to you. It was gifted. Gifted by my blood for there would be no other answer. Tell me, Malfoix. Tell me...where is Duke Wyllt?"

"Go to hell," Draco spat back, flicking his wand, probably for another spell.

"I already have..." the figure said, "And I have come back."

Faster than the boy could pronounce words, the leader of the hunt, Arthur, charged ahead. Harry cringed as he saw the sword's sweeping motion towards his friend, and nearly closed his eyes. Hermione's face pressed hard against his shoulder, maybe in an attempt to avoid seeing the gory prospective.

Draco wasn't fast enough. He did try to move back, reacting by instincts alone, but he simply was no match for some creature that hell itself had birthed. The sword came down against the boy's side, the blade twisting as it pierced through the robe and the skin. The tip sailed in an arc, leaving behind a gash that oozed blood. The boy screamed as he fell on the ground, before the voice of Ginny sounded in the air.

"He's there! He's over there in the corner!" as the girl desperately screamed, pointing at Harry, the boy just tensed. The gazes of the assembled wizards in the parliament were on him, but the feral smile on Cornelius face? That was something he hadn't actually expected to see. Why hadn't anyone tried to escape? Wasn't there an exit!?

His mind screamed those thoughts as he took a deep breath, recalling his own promise. He narrowed his eyes on the once spectral rider, and as he took a step forward of his own, the crowd parted to let him move. The ashen gazes and the empty faces of the wizards and the witches gave him pause.

"Why aren't they..."

"You do not remember us, Harry?" the figure answered his murmur. "Dementors were what we were morphed into, but even as a mockery, one thing they held true."

"You feed on souls."

"No! No," Arthur shook his head, moving his other arm in an arc. The people around them stepped aside, leaving only Hermione firmly attached to his arm as if it was her only anchor of safety. "Not on souls, but on will. The desire to move, the desire to eat, to drink, to bathe, the need to wake up and walk, the will to fight, to defend, to betray...the will to do things and to need things and to feel things."

"So you're demons? Have you fallen so low, Arthur?" Harry asked. His wand was ready.

"And you are a failure as a King, a horrible heir and a stupid naïve little kid: what is just and what is right seldom is the same thing, do you not know that?"

"I did what I thought was best!"

"You did what a bird chirped you into doing!" Arthur shot back. "You followed another's lead instead of yours! And the mistakes fell on your shoulders, didn't they!? That is the bane of royalty and of power! The fault lies in you, always! It does not matter the excuses. It is always your fault. Whether you win or lose, you are always at fault." Bitterly, the leader of the hunt gestured to his other kin, who encircled them by forming a ring of their pale armoured bodies.

"Let's cut the chase, Wyllt. I am here for the sword. Give it to me, and I will let you go."

"The staff freed you from your curse," he whispered. "The stone brought you in the realm of the living...and the sword...Excalibur cuts through shackles, doesn't it? It can free all that is bind."

"It does." Arthur replied truthfully, "yet you will not walk away alive if we confront."

"Maybe, but what is it you fear?" Harry looked at Excalibur, then at the sword that the other man was wielding. "Is your sword as special as this one?"

"Clarent," Hermione whispered. "It fits: it's the only sword that could defeat Arthur's, if we believe myth."

"Irony isn't it?" the leader of the hunt did not refute, instead deciding to talk to Hermione, who was standing still too close to him, still within the ring. Why was the girl in the ring!? She should have remained behind!

"Clarent was wielded by the bastard son of Arthur, which he had with his sister Morgause. Mordred was his name, wasn't it? There never was a Mordred, let me tell you this." The eyes of Arthur shone briefly as he spoke. "There never was a Morgause either. There

was only a group of stupid children who believed they could alter time, led by an even more stupid idiot who believed one could reach Atlantis by going back to the time of its creation. 'If you can't reach a where, then reach a when' he used to say."

"You're bidding time," Harry pointed out, his gaze falling on Hermione who was starting to wobble.

"You caught me, but now it's too late." Arthur smiled. "The Kiss of the Dementors sucks out one's Will, not one's soul. The will to do anything is removed, leaving behind a body that acts only on its most basic instincts...and sometimes not even on those."

Harry clenched the sword tightly, his palm digging itself into the leather handle. Draco was probably bleeding to death somewhere in the back, Hermione was going to be killed, and he was there talking with someone he should be fighting.

"Not all myths are true," Harry murmured. "Let's see if Clarent's real or not then!"

The slash came in front of him in a split-second. The barely managed movement of the head to the side avoided him becoming blind, albeit a long gash opened up on his cheek. The burning sensation soon followed that of the blood splattering down on the ground, while the crimson tip of Clarent moved back before thrusting forward.

He swept an arc with Excalibur, the swords clashing in sparks. Barely had he deflected the blow of the sword that it pushed through his shoulder. He screamed as he felt fire run through his veins, but when he uncaringly brought his sword closer, Arthur took a step back. The sword was removed from the wound with a slosh sound, as the blood began to pour down on his robes.

"Clarent was made for peace, not for war." Arthur commented. "The sword as meant to knight, and not to kill... funny, knighting a king doesn't make much sense does it? Should I call your friend a liar, Duke Wyllt? What is it that attracted you to the name in the first place, child? Was it the noble title? The power behind the ancient name?" Arthur's head bowed slightly to the side, as he closed one eye.

"Maybe you suffer from a hero complex. Or maybe you are forced into one by the events that surround you. I know that all too well, trust me. I was born so that I could be destined to become a king. I know how it feels, waking up one morning to realize that nothing is there because of me, but because an old and white bearded imbecile had to make things right!"

Harry winced. "You want to be set free, right?" Arthur asked then, his sword loose with the tip touching the ground. "Then be free! Give me back Excalibur, and go!"

He narrowed his eyes, locking his own gaze with that of the crazed creature that barely resembled a human in old armour. "Excalibur has to be given, not taken by force."

Arthur's eyes narrowed as the man hissed out an angry snarl.

"Maybe I underestimated your wits, heir of Wyllt...but I can force you to give it to me!"

The next moment, he swept his sword forward as he charged, only for Arthur's foot to collide against his chest and send him back, to crash against the ground. Harry gagged as his stomach menaced to empty itself in his mouth. He stumbled back on his feet, his breathing harsh and ragged as the man simply looked at him without even caring...but with Hermione held at sword point.

"You see Harry," Arthur said. "Power requires sacrifices. For the Greater Good little Evils must be done." The creature chuckled. "Care to wager what you will do now, Harry?"

"Let her go," he whispered. "She's got nothing to do with this."

"Oh how wrong you are..." Arthur said, his eyes trailing off to somewhere outside the circle, "She is the reason we are here. Well, not actually her mind you, more like...her other her? Shall we call it future-her? We did our best, mind you. Time and time again we did all that we could," the creature snarled, "And time and time again it ended in ashes and blood!"

A loud set of clanking of metal against metal echoed from around the ring, the other huntsmen joining in the cacophony of noises.

"We fought the Saxon and the Briton. We fought the Romans and the Germans! One time on one side, one time on the other did we fight, for time changes things beyond any possible understanding... and men weren't meant for the power to alter the choices." Arthur chuckled. "Man wasn't meant to go back and erase all the sins he had committed, he wasn't entitled to the power he stole! So answer my question, Harry James Potter, Duke Wyllt, will she live or will she die?"

And with that, Arthur smiled.

And with that, Harry found himself facing a choice.

A choice he truly didn't want to make. He didn't know what would happen if he gave Excalibur to Arthur. He knew what would happen if he didn't. Hermione would die. The girl wasn't struggling any longer against Arthur's hold, maybe Excalibur negated whatever the 'absorption of will' was about. Yet if didn't drop it soon, would Hermione be no better off than kissed?

Some cheesy romantic might have said that love conquered all: to give the sword, save the girl and find another way, a *deus ex machina*, to win —like a power that came out only for those who loved. Logic didn't want him to give the sword. The hunger for power and the eagerness in wielding it were traits of a tyrant, but the sword had been given to him. It was his to use, not of the fallen man.

Hermione's empty eyes stared at him, with a look of resignation. Did the girl think so little of him, that she believed he would sacrifice her for the sword?

He was considering the option however; didn't that make him as guilty as having already done the deed?

He didn't know what the right choice was and what the correct one was. All he knew was that he had to choose: the sword or the girl.

But who was there to tell him that Arthur would go through his own side of the deal?

Lillian would have flung the sword at the man, Gryffindor as she was. He couldn't. Dread pooled into his stomach as he lifted the sword

and bit his lip, averting his gaze from that of Hermione as he made a choice that he knew would haunt him for all eternity.

If only he had had the Time-Turner of Merlin, he could have gone back in time and changed things.

He could have looked for something powerful enough to defeat the hunt. He could have found something that would have saved Hermione. He would have managed it, and this would have become nothing more than just another celebration.

Yet in the end he hadn't.

He could not go back in time. The Time-Turner was lost.

His way of escaping was gone. The sword felt heavy in his hands, its weight making him tremble as he sharply breathed in one last time before exhaling.

And then he plunged the sword down on the ground, letting it meet the rock of the floor and leaving it piercing through it.

"I'll let you claim the sword if you hand Hermione over now," he intoned. "Maybe I'm not a hero...but that's what makes myself me."

Arthur smiled as he slowly dropped Hermione's body on the ground.

"To the count of three, we will circle one another." Arthur replied, his left hand waving upwards, clearly indicating he would be circling towards the left. "Then, once you reach your so precious friend, you will give Excalibur onto me as it is meant to be."

"All right," Harry said. His forehead was covered in a slight glaze of sweat, as he began to circle, his gaze fixed on Arthur who did the same. The green eyes and the dark hair changed ever so slowly to light blue and blond the closer he got to the sword.

"You made a choice," Arthur taunted him. "Now you have to live with it."

And with those words, two of the huntsmen in the ring charged forward, their lances striking to where Hermione was laying on the ground. He had only one choice to save the girl.

Why again, had he chosen to play the hero?

Hermione Granger

Hermione's eyes snapped open at the sound of some strong squelching. Her eyes saw the green ones of Harry, looking at her with a small and bitter smile. Twin tips of spears emerged from his chest, blood pooling down both of them. The breathing of the boy was ragged, and yet he still managed to wheeze out, right in front of her, a few words.

"I made...my choice." And then he fell down on her. Her eyes widened as she felt Harry's body go limp on her, and for a single instant she didn't care about anything else. She hyperventilated as she forced herself to get on her knees. The two who had used their lances to attack Harry moved them out and retreated, only for the snarl of Arthur to reach them.

"You fools, what have you done!? Now the sword will remain there!" Arthur's snarls didn't matter to her, as her hands turned red as she tried to stem the flow of blood.

"Don't die Harry," she whispered frenetically, "please don't." She pleaded. Her eyes stung with tears as she tried to press the robes of the boy against the open wounds. "Please open your eyes, Harry. Please!"

Why wasn't the blood stopping!?

Harry was Harry: he couldn't die. There wasn't a story where the knight died at the end. It just wasn't done. The stories never had the knight dying at the end. They never had. They shouldn't have them. The knight had to live, if he didn't then what of the princess? Was she meant to die alone?

Where was Harry!?

Harry couldn't have died. This had to be Draco under polyjuice, never mind the fact that the whore of a sister he had was going to

die painfully after today. No, what mattered was that Harry wasn't breathing.

"Breathe! For me, please, breathe!" she screamed into his face, to no avail. Was he starting to get cold? He shouldn't be cold. Harry was warm. Harry had always been warm. Harry was the one who did the saving, yes, he did, and he **SHOULDN'T BE COLD**.

"I wonder, if he dies here, does time cease to exist altogether?" a voice remarked. "Would that be a problem anyway? Shouldn't ending a cycle be better than starting another one? Shouldn't death just be the natural conclusion?" Hermione knew the voice was familiar, but she didn't care. She had to save Harry, the how was something that eluded her in that instant, but there was no doubt she would be able to save him, no doubt at all!

"There's really no other way around this, is there?" the voice said again. Why couldn't that bitch just stay quiet!? She had to think and save her knight. She had to. She was meant to. Wasn't that what the princesses did?

No, the princesses only were pretty girls locked in towers. Harry didn't need a pretty girl locked in a tower. He didn't need a girl who was bawling her eyes out because he wasn't breathing!

She had to do something, anything.

"You are truly a sight to behold: stupidity to its finest levels."

She turned to the voice, her wand drawn and then blinked.

"You know, you realize you're actually mad when you start to reason that you possibly can't be mad for listening to some random voice popping out in the middle of a traumatic event. It's a traumatic event, how should your mind actually answer and process the sheer amount of evens circling around you if not for some sort of trigger to avoid more damage? Sheesh aren't you the stupid one."

"Episkey." Hermione whispered, and as the spell hit Harry's chest and it didn't work...the girl screamed in rage.

"Just heal! Please, for me...for me? Please..."

"Try Reparo, who knows...it might actually work." The voice snapped at her again.

"Reparo!"

The wounds closed, sizzling as the smell of burnt flesh reached her nostrils. This smell was different from that of Dumbledore's hand burning. This smell was that of Harry's flesh burning. It wasn't a smell she wanted to sniff. She didn't want Harry to burn. She didn't want him to burn and yet he was burning and it was her own fault.

"Breathe Harry, please." Her right hand cupped his cheek, as her face was inches apart his. He was looking so beautiful in his sleep, but he had to breathe. He had to take air in his lungs and move his chest up and down. He had to. He was meant to.

"Oh right, because people always do what you expect them to do, right? Like Dumbledore helping you out of prison, or your parents being there for you or your friends always next to you... now why don't you look what this brought up? He's dead. He died protecting you. And here you are crying while around you the world is going mad."

She shivered and turned her gaze around, trying to find the horrendous bitchy voice that was talking. Her eyes settled on the Leader of the Hunt, so desperately trying to take the sword out of the stone floor that he was ignoring everything else around him. The wizards and the witches seemed transfixed, their gazes lost in front of them.

Behind them, only Draco seemed somewhat still trying to work out something, his side covered in blood as he muttered against his wounded side some words she couldn't catch. Ginny —the whore she was going to kill slowly— was already with her eyes glazed over.

"He has something that keeps him from being seen. He has the Invisibility cloak hidden beneath another cloak. You know you can take it out from him if you act quickly. You just need to chop his head off!"

She froze with her wand clutched firmly in her hand. Where was that damn voice!?

"If you don't, you're going to die here, Hermione. Do you think he'd want that? Hey, you know you can carry his head out then? Maybe stuff it with hay and all things nice too."

"Shut up," she whispered.

"Now that's not nice. I'm feeling sad. How did the Queen of Hearts go about? 'Off with her head!' Well come on now, off with his! He's dead and he doesn't need it!"

"Shut up," she hissed again. "He's alive. Harry's just...he's just sleeping."

He's not breathing Hermione. His heart isn't beating. You killed Harry.

You already killed him.

You're a poisonous cancer that killed him.

You killed him. You killed him. You killed him.

You killed your own knight, princess. Off his head now, Queen of Hearts and get the cloak. It's your only way out. You know it, we know it. Get the CLOAK.

She shuddered and closed her eyes, tears streaming down her face as the tip of her wand went to Harry's neck.

You can always carry his head around like a trophy. Kiss the head a goodnight every time you want, and he might even talk back to you eventually. Isn't that nice?

"Dif—"

"NO!" the loud scream startled her, forcing her to stop the spell.

And just in that instant, Harry coughed and breathed again.

As he opened his emerald eyes to look at her, Hermione's own breath caught in her throat as she felt herself constrict under the gaze of the boy she loved.

She had nearly killed him.

She, she, not someone else, she, she, she, SHE had nearly killed him.

No, not her, the other voice had tried to. The other voice had tried to get her to kill her loved Harry. Her Harry had nearly died because of that voice. She wasn't going to let that voice talk to her again, no. That voice hated Harry, she loved him. That voice wanted Harry dead, she wanted him to be hers. There was a difference and there was just no way...

And Harry stood up slowly, wrapping his arms around her body as he unclasped the cloak she would never have found, and as they both disappeared under the veil of Invisibility, the tears that leaked down her eyes weren't just of relief...

They were also of pure and unbridled hatred for the Voice that had dared tell her wrong.

Harry would have died truly by her hand had she done that, and she didn't want to. She stopped her thoughts on the matter when she felt the boy's arms press around her, making her blush slightly as she could hear his ragged breathing so close to her while they moved away.

They left behind the hall, and as they left Harry hazarded a small whispered sentence.

"Time-Turners," he said as if it would explain everything.

"THEY DISAPPEARED!" the voice of the leader of the hunt echoed behind them. "Find them now! Find them, and bring me back the heir of Wyllt! Kill the girl, kill the wizards, kill the witches, but bring me the boy!"

And as the sound of hooves and the roaring of the men of the hunt echoed through the corridor, Hermione grasped Harry's arm and brought him through a set of hallways towards the lift, and once there...

She pushed the button for the Department of Mysteries.

Author's notes

And this chapter was easy to write.

Confrontations are always easier than 'transitions'.

Arthur's mythological story is similar to Harry's. White bearded guy, manipulate the birth of the Hero to solve problems...you know how things go afterwards no?

Now to answer some reviewer's questions:

There is no planned crossover. If there is, I had no idea beforehand of similarities.

Now, have you noticed the underlined bit?

Well, you can guess where one use of it would have been in the Original Time-Line.

Tenchi: you asked how the Hermione not 'healed' would turn out? Well...hope you like her like this!

Harry Wylt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter Fifteen

It was only a matter of time, he supposed. Cornelius was nothing more than an empty shell, and Dumbledore nothing else than a rambling fool, but still he had hoped for something more. He had kept himself hidden deep within the thoughts of the Prime Minister, letting the creatures of the Hunt drain all the will of the whimpering man that once was the minister of Wizardry Britain.

Now that position was de-facto his, of Salazar Slytherin. The scream of Arthur echoed through the room, as the poor ill-guided child sent his men out of the room. The huntsmen actually ran, dispersing their effect. The first to recover were the Aurors, who began to blink their eyes at the sight of what was going on. He just narrowed his eyes, keeping his gaze settled on the sword.

Excalibur...the sword that could cut.

That was pretty shrewd of Arthur, he had to admit. He had to wonder what game the man was playing, to need the sword so desperately as to forget his surroundings. He supposed he had lived so long in the pain of being a Dementor that he didn't come out completely sane. Now back in the world of the living, he suspected he still believed himself to be nigh invincible.

Considering how the only opponent the man had fought had been a boy barely fourteen, he could even understand it. He wondered if he really should give the signal to his aurors to attack. He didn't actually care, since Arthur wasn't even planning to kill them. He probably just wanted the sword. It was the only way in after all.

Merlin's descendant or a bone of his body unlocked the Clock-Tower's wards. The Wand, the Cloak or the Stone opened the path, but without the first the only way through would be by trials one harder than the other. The last bit, the think that truly opened to the use of the Tower, was something they could no longer obtain.

They needed her blood, after all.

Morgana's blood was lost in time, her entire body torn apart by the spinning gears of the Time-Line. It had been the price to stabilize the

reality. He remembered it as if it had been done yesterday...the screams, the pleading, the hope...and then the squashing refusal.

Kids who had wanted to play with Time had been punished for it: there had been no other choice. Merlin had faced his destiny grimly, but with understanding. Arthur was here, refusing and trying to tear apart the reality that was already shattering, bit by bit. Already he could feel the cracks on the surface, the throbbing and the pulsing of magic as it twisted in pain. There was little time left, he supposed, as his eyes travelled to where Mad-Eye Moody was currently giving signals to the Aurors near him.

Fiendfyre? In the ballroom? Oh the auror's moniker of Mad was clearly well earned, if he thought that a mere set of portkeys could actually bring the entire rabble of noble aristocrats out in time. Probably some in the first rows would die charred to a crisp. He twitched his lips lightly in amusement, as he took a few steps back.

He didn't actually have to play the charade of being a frightened Cornelius Fudge. He twisted his wand's tip and flicked it forward, as the entire stage morphed into a set of crossbows already primed and ready to fire. The volley departed nearly instantaneously, many of the bolts landing with a satisfying noise through the armours the huntsmen wore.

Blood splatters fell on the ground, and in that instant the Huntsmen that had remained, together with Arthur, realized their folly: they were mortal again.

That meant they could be killed.

To feel the taste of air, then one had to survive the pain of being wounded.

Another flick, a sharp thrust, and a dragon of copper and bronze flung itself at the huntsmen as his aurors decided to start casting their first spells. Of course Mad-Eye's use of Fiendfyre didn't pass through. Nymphadora pretty much slapped him —last he had seen— out of it. His lips twitched upwards, the faint smile echoing his delight in seeing Arthur forced to retreat deeper within the bowels of the ministry.

For all of his might, all of his actions...alone, Arthur was nothing more than a little sad man—one that he would enjoy crushing, once he got Excalibur out of the ground.

"Moody! Get me Miss Potter! She might be heroic enough to get the sword out of the ground," and if she wasn't, she would still serve him well as a descendant of Arthur. There were quite a few curses that could work with the blood of a descendant after all.

"Croaker! Get the lords and lady back home! Create portkeys for those who don't have a wand or don't know how to make one!" he snapped curtly, before descending from the half-torn apart stage that his transfiguration magic had nigh destroyed.

"Minister, you can't seriously think my daughter—" the senior Potter began to speak, but a single icy glare from him was more than enough to silence the whelp.

"I do not think. I know. Now, Lord Potter, go and bring here your daughter: there is no longer a threat in the ballroom, if you notice." His hand swayed to his side, displaying the torn apart room and the dispersing nobles.

"Where's Harry?" the terrified voice of Lily Potter soon caught his attention. "Where's Hermione? Where did they go?" he knew terror, he could feel it creep through the throat of the woman who seemed just a split second away from reaching a natural conclusion to an extremely frightening event. Indeed, as he looked with a half-bored gaze, the woman's eyes rolled on the back of her head as she fainted.

Probably she had suspected them dead. Maybe torn apart...or maybe hunted—and this was the real case.

He took a single deep breath, and then he waited, for Lillian Potter to arrive. He had a naughty child to punish, after all, and without the correct instrument the lesson would—unfortunately—not stick.

Professor Graham

It hurt. Her left arm hurt. It looked spliced and splintered, giving off a light blue colour that seemed a mixture of electric neon and ocean. There was no blood, or sight of bones or muscles beneath the

cracks and the open wounds; in their place was a suffused blue fog that didn't drift nor did it move. It hurt however, to even gently touch it. Was this what it meant to disappear forever?

She closed her eyes, her body covered by the Invisibility cloak she had been gifted by her parting lover. Or had it been him, the monster that had inhabited Harry's skin? She didn't know which of the two he had been in that moment, but did it matter?

In the end, Harry had loved her nevertheless. For all of her broken bits, for all of her insecurities and wrong desires...for all her jealousy unwarranted and unwanted...he had still loved her. He had died for her, once. She had seen it. She had understood it.

Yet no matter how many times she went back and forth, nothing worked. She had tried her best, but her best had never been enough. He had died, time and time again, with her just watching from different angles the same blood-freezing scene.

And then things had changed. Finally for once Harry hadn't died. They had escaped. They had battled Dumbledore and Cornelius, they had fought the ministry at a standstill within Hogwarts, and a treaty had been issued. Harry was really a King then... And when he got the crown, she knew Peeves had played the strings all along.

She had gone back, fighting tooth and nail for one last chance. She had gotten it, and it had been for nothing. He had won again. He always seemed to win. She had aged, but she hadn't lost her hope. Finally...finally the last time came and everything changed again.

This time, the last time, there was hope in her chest for things to go differently. The Time-Turners lay all destroyed. There were none except the one holding her body together in the Ministry, and the search of this Harry and this Hermione would be for nothing. They would look for them, but they would not find any.

She could die in peace, embracing the Invisibility Cloak that still managed to smell like her lover. She had screamed the No, saving her past-self from committing the crime she had experienced for herself countless times. She had done what had to be done. Her eyes settled on Cornelius Fudge, the man who had given the order to use Unforgivables on school children.

The man who had been forced to accept a treaty after losing his Unspeakables to her Harry's might. It had been a show of strength, just like Harry and Dumbledore battling over the towers of Hogwarts, repeatedly tearing apart the landscape as they fought.

Yet Dumbledore had kept on coming. She smiled bitterly after coughing up blood: the old coot was in for a surprise, if he ever died again. She had to be bleeding internally, where the veins that should have gone in her right arm disappeared. She had used a Reparo, but even that wasn't strong enough to delay the inevitable.

This reality was expelling her, banishing her from existence. It was the price to pay, and she had known about it from the very beginning. She had known that eventually, this would be her final time. It was needed, because as long as she existed, then Hermione's destiny would be the same. She didn't know if now her younger self would live or die, if Harry would be saved or not...

But at last, she wouldn't have to see him die again. She wouldn't have to see his eyes lose their light, his chest stop rising, his muscles lax down. She wouldn't have to cry, to scream, to pound his chest for any sign of him being alive.

She wouldn't have to listen to another him laugh, with the face not his own but belonging to a monster. She wouldn't have...

And that was enough for her to die peacefully.

She had to hide the Time-Turner and the Cloak, but not before recovering the sword. It was important.

Lillian arrived with a worried face, looking around fretfully for any sign of her past-self or her brother. She screamed a 'what happened to mum!?' before being brought hurriedly along to try and remove the sword from the stone.

It did not yield...

Of course it would not.

Softly, the hand holding her wand rose forward for a moment, pointed at the girl who was desperately trying to take the sword. Eventually she would succeed.

She knew that Harry would be forced to fight with an inferior copy — the sword of Salazar... and she couldn't let that come to pass.

And so, with the hate of all those times the girl had been there interrupting her, with all the times the girl had yelled and screamed and ruined Harry's plans, with all the times she had just been there breathing...

Hermione Granger, Time-Traveller for far too many times than she could count, whispered two words filled with all the hatred she could muster.

"Avada Kedavra!"

And the green dazzling light shot forward, flying in the air as it perfectly clashed against Lillian's entire body. The girl froze, and then slumped on the ground.

Hermione smiled as she wobbled up. The volley of wands belonging to the aurors and Unspeakables were out now, but it was no use. No matter the revealing charms, the Invisibility Cloak would not be pierced. She felt her soul break, but what was another crack? Now it would be their turn to cry. Lillian's father screamed as he cradled the body of his dead daughter, but in that instant she couldn't care less.

She had a final destination to make, and nobody would stop her.

Harry Potter

He had died. He knew that for a fact. He knew he had died the moment he had felt his heart stop beating. Yet at the same time...he had woken up again. The cold feeling left his bones, and warmth had spread through his flesh. He knew he had stopped breathing. There had been no mysterious light to go to however, no God or Devil to call him on what he had done. There had been nothing.

One moment, he was seeing the pitch black darkness of his eyelids, the next he was blinking his eyes open and covering Hermione under the Cloak with him.

Was the Cloak the answer?

It should have a limit. Such power... to be able to avoid death as long as he wore it, there had to be a price to pay. Had he sold his soul? He didn't want to suspect such a thing, but even if he had, shouldn't there be a warning about it?

As they stumbled out of the elevator and into the Department of Mysteries, Hermione began to walk slightly ahead of him. He didn't know how the girl knew where to go, but maybe she was simply walking in hope of finding some sort of sign?

Carefully, the girl opened a door, and after having peeked inside closed it again. No alarm sounded, and Harry couldn't help but snort. Really? The Department of Mysteries was without an alarm? Maybe it was supposed to be manhandled, but the ball and the celebration had taken away all of them. It could be an answer, but it still left him puzzled.

It was when they found the first trail of blood, that he realized something was wrong with the entire picture. There were signs of battle, holes in the ground and deep gashes. There were no corpses, but a door was unhinged and its interior charred. An opaque plaque stood outside of the door, declaring it a prohibited entry to all unauthorized personnel.

It was the only plaque in the entire corridor.

Hermione stopped in front of the charred room, before clutching her head. Behind them, the elevator's door closed as it slowly began to rise again. Someone had called it: they had to hurry.

"Harry," the girl whispered. Her voice was cracked as she seemed to shrink on herself. "This is the room."

He paled as his eyes widened. He walked slowly inside, looking around with more and more desperation as his hand that wasn't holding the cloak moved to touch the empty charred remains of the shelves. There was nothing in there. He saw a glint of white and removed a black piece of burnt wood, but his eyes merely narrowed as it revealed a bone that had yet to completely char.

There was no Time-Turner in the room.

No way back to try and change things. No way to go back and look for another solution.

But it didn't make any sense.

He knew he had seen his future selves fight one against the other. He had seen them kill each other! Was that a ruse? How could he kill and be killed, if he didn't have a Time-Turner? Was there anything that actually made sense!?

He felt his head hurt. Even if he went back to the very beginning, what could he do? He would look for clues on Arthur's origins, starting by Merlin's tomb. He would explore the forest of Broceliande, wouldn't he? He would go to the Lourdes then, probably. Maybe he would find what he sought in the end, and then?

Then he would try to challenge Arthur and succeed.

Once he succeeded, he would probably believe himself powerful enough to challenge the system. He was the King of Hogwarts after all, he was Duke Wyllt. He was ousting Dumbledore from his office, wasn't he? Would the old man obey however?

No, he wouldn't.

He would fight him. They would fight for it. He knew he wouldn't be able to challenge and defeat Dumbledore to begin with, so he'd go back a second time.

He'd train more. He'd age. He'd seek answers and ways to increase his power. Then he would challenge Dumbledore again...

And afterwards?

Afterwards...something would happen. Something horrible, that would make him curse his very self. And he would go back a third time, to kill his past-self.

As he went back the third time however, the one of the second time would come over to kill the one of the third time and be destroyed at the same time.

That...that wasn't possible, it would pretzel the entire line of events: even if he killed his future-self, the other one was still younger than the other. There was no way that event was possible.

Unless...

Unless the Clock-Tower was used for its original purpose, the same one that had sent one of the two Merlins mad.

He hadn't gone back the third time with the Time-Turner. He had used the Clock-Tower. That had altered the events to the point where his past killed his future. Since his future had directed his past to reach for him, then both were removed from existence.

That, beyond everything else, made sense.

It was an epiphany he supposed.

It was also what made the most sense out of the entire cluster-fuck that Time was becoming.

It just had to be his luck, he supposed. He was sent to Hogwarts, and a conspiracy involved the Headmaster. He was adopted, and his new mother was a psychopathic servant of the Dark Lord. His second year had been in Durmstrang, where he had seen and battled their Headmaster. He was given a Time-Turner...and this, this mess generated.

He wondered if he would ever feel boredom, in having a normal time at school eventually.

Come here.

A voice whispered tenderly from the hallway.

Come here.

It whispered again, the tone chilly and frosty.

He moved, Hermione settling for following his silent lead through the corridor of the Department of Mysteries, walking near the other doors until they reached a final one. One that seemed to open up

with the lightest touch, to show them into an amphitheatre of sorts, with an archway erected in the middle of it.

There was a thin and transparent veil flowing slightly in the middle of it, as if an invisible breeze was ruffling it.

Come here.

I am waiting.

He hesitated, before starting to slowly descend the stairs.

"That's the veil," Hermione whispered. "It's one of the methods of execution used by the ministry...Harry? Are you listening to me?"

No, he wasn't.

He was listening to the voice.

Come over. I am waiting.

Come to me, I have what you desire.

"Harry? Harry —stop!" Hermione's scream brought him back to reality, as he took a shuddering breath a few steps away from the archway.

"Harry, what's going on? Is something happening?"

"I can tell you what is happening," another voice burst in the silence of the room, as Professor Graham's head appeared from the top of the amphitheatre. She had probably been the one to follow them, and yet something made him perplexed. Why was he seeing only her head? "The question is, will you listen?" she continued, taking a few steps back as he realized she was beneath an Invisibility cloak.

He recognized the cloak. It was the same as his, how could he not?

"I...I knew it," he whispered. He snapped his eyes open wide, looking carefully to the right and the left, half-expecting the Hunt to already be on his trail.

"Worry not, my King," the Professor replied. "Without their hounds, birthed from their sins, they cannot find you as you speak."

"Who are you?" Hermione asked, "And why are you calling Harry—"

"You can't be that thick," the Professor snorted back. "I did my best to teach you about the ministry, didn't I? About the Arthurian mythology, Merlin's history, and all that helped you piece together this riddle."

Harry brought up an eyebrow at that bit of information, before turning to stare at Hermione. If the professor's words were true, then the woman was an ally...yet she seemed to be donning his own cloak, which could only mean...

"You're her," he whispered. He should have seen it sooner. Only the hair colour was different, but the lineaments, the eyes... "You're Hermione."

"Yes," Professor Graham spoke calmly. "I am."

"Harry?" Hermione's voice came out choked to his side. "What are you talking about?"

"She is you, from the future...how many times?" Harry asked. "How many times did you go back?"

"There are too many to count from where I come from, but here? Here only once...since this is the result." Her right arm, or what was meant to be it, came into view then. It was torn apart, split and cracked as a blue coloured light emanated from within it. "Only because I used the Time-Turner of Merlin did I manage this. Otherwise we would be stuck in a loop. You cannot change time with a normal Time-Turner, and even that of Merlin cannot do much except keep your real self... true enough? I don't know how to describe it better, my King." Her eyes softened as she gazed at him. "I tried hard, really I did...in the end I had to go through the Clock-Tower myself. It was the only way."

"What happened?" Harry said, looking around nervously, in wait for the Hunt to appear from nowhere.

"Arthur, the other one, the mad one...he appeared." The Future-Hermione took a small breath, before explaining as she usually did, that so much resembled how her past one explained. "Think of going through a motion, like lifting a cup. You lift the cup, and then you put it down. Afterwards, you go back in time and watch yourself do the same motion, before taking out the Time-Turner and going back in time. As your past becomes your present, everything is fine. Time is appeased, and the Time-Line can continue to hold."

Harry nodded subtly, he could understand this.

"The Clock-Tower removes that need. The past does not need to become the present. So it splits. You don't have to watch yourself lower the mug. You can break it in mid-air. If your past then uses the Time-Turner to fix the line, nothing happens. Your past and present melt together and you recall your mug being broken, rather than just put down."

"And if that doesn't happen..." Harry's voice was a bare whisper then, but the answer came in a male voice, one that he dreaded because it was extremely familiar.

"Then you live and at the same time remember everything your past self is doing, at the same moment as your true memories mix." Cornelius Fudge chuckled as he came down the stairs of the room, his wand out and poised to strike. He was alone and yet as he stilled midway the smile on his face...

Somehow, Harry didn't believe the man to simply be the Prime Minister. The coldness in the voice was different, eerily familiar too.

"And madness ensues," the man added. "Merlin did say he would be killed thrice, in one of the myths. I wouldn't say 'killed' as much as 'pacified' but it was the only solution. We had to do it, with all of them. They were kids who had toyed with magic too powerful for their understanding. We had to try and save them, since they were our blood...and the hastily made patch worked. It worked for years, decades and centuries. We all vowed we would not remove it, that we would keep it where it stood untouched and unaltered..."

His voice trailed off as he narrowed his gaze on Harry.

"And then you came along."

Cornelius' wand moved faster than any of them could see, as Future-Hermione was literally torn to splinters of blood and ash as her body splattered on the ground, while his time Hermione merely had the time to scream before she burned alive, leaving behind nothing but ashes.

Ashes and blood.

"You despicable imbecile did the only thing you were not meant to do. You freed Arthur. You could have killed him. I would have killed him, rather than set him free, but you didn't. You freed him because a bird told you to!" the voice was too familiar for his tastes, "Even when I went to such lengths to keep you away from it, you did it nonetheless!"

And Harry's eyes widened, as he realized what the man was meaning.

"Godric gave you the ring of Merlin because he wanted his son freed, for some sort of paternal ideal I suppose. I didn't want any of them freed! They would all rot and be punished as it was meant to be! As my own son suffered so too did one of Godric, as my son gave away to pain unimaginable so too would one of his! It was meant to be that way! It was meant to be a perfect circle, a perfect solution...and then you came along and destroyed it all! You tore apart the fabrics of Time and reality for your fretful disposition in obeying a damnable bird!"

Harry took a step backwards, as Salazar instead took one forward.

Salazar Slytherin eyed him with fury, as he spoke and the ground around them cracked and splintered.

"You think this is over, Harry Potter? You think calling yourself Duke Wyllt —calling yourself a King— means that you become one overnight?" Salazar chuckled grimly, as he moved closer just as he faltered back.

"Well, think again Harry Potter, because you just have no idea what hell you have brought on Earth." Salazar breathed once more, before his cold eyes settled on him with something akin to disdain. "I will have to fix this, as always. You know that one of legends tells

that the Lady of the Lake died because she was forgotten? Well Harry...all of this, everything you see around you...will never be yours to see again."

And with the mere flick of the wrist, Harry Potter felt himself being flung through the veil, the Invisibility cloak shining as he passed through it.

The air left his chest while his lungs felt as if someone was trying to pull them out. His entire body felt sluggish and cold. He squirmed as if he was beneath the water, but all around him was only pitch-black darkness. He opened his mouth to scream from the pain, but in that moment his entire body twisted as if somebody was apparating him elsewhere.

He stumbled, his entire body giving way to a paralyzing weakness that seemed to be spreading through his nerves. He stumbled down face first on a soft and mushy ground, which seemed more of a mixture between mud and sleet than rock or grass. His vision blurred as a squashing feeling of pain and shock settled on him.

He could hear the screams now, coming closer and closer to where he was, and a blurry figure calling them forth with a shining spot next to him.

He had no weapon to fight. He had nothing to use as it walked closer.

And then he felt something enlarge itself beneath his cloak. The Staff of Merlin had been forgotten by him in his pocket till then, as if somehow it had never been the right moment to call upon it. Yet now it stood there, whispering to him as he slowly moved his right hand to grasp it.

He grasped the wood staff tightly, and then he pointed it at the blurred figure.

He saw the thorns dash forth, flying in the air as they pierced through the other figure, tearing it apart as crimson blood splattered on the ground.

His brain burned as if he was on fire, the memories of being torn apart by invisible strings reaching him as he widened his eyes for a

single fleeting moment, before blood oozed out of his mouth, and he closed his eyes again.

He had killed himself before the deed.

Apparently, it hadn't been enough. Memories of being torn, slashed, pierced all assaulted him one after the other. It wasn't only this Harry. It was all of them. He felt the stab of the past Harry. He felt the claws of Sophie on his face. He screamed at the bites of the Inferi. He roared at the attacks of the monsters that lurked the forest of Broceliande.

And then, after all of that...

It disappeared.

Collapsing upon itself like a castle of cards, the memories he had held, the memories he had felt—he had believed in— disappeared. Nothing but emptiness, and the cold chilling feel of a Dementor lurking close to him, but not close enough to see him.

For Death would be thwarted for as long as he stood beneath the Cloak, and he knew that...he knew that and he understood, he understood that what had happened hadn't been a mere circumstance of chance or fate. He had been meant to die.

He should have died.

But the prophecies would not permit it.

The Cloak would not permit it.

And together, they had worked against the archway that was a passage to Death itself.

Harry laughed as he cried tears of relief, pain wracking through his entire body.

He was alive. He could change things now, he could...he coughed out hard, as he tried and failed to roll himself on his stomach, to try and stand up.

The scenery around him morphed, as he realized he could not be there if his past had been killed. The ground melted and tore itself apart, splitting up as it gushed out clocks and hourglasses filled with sand. His eyes focused once more, as the pain all but receded until it disappeared completely.

He took a deep shuddering breath as he slowly stood up.

The room looked like the base of the Clock-Tower, where the Pendulum used to swing.

The thing that surprised him, however, wasn't the pain that was disappearing with every second that passed, as if it had never been there.

No, it was the fleeting sensation that some things were wrong, but he couldn't just place them correctly.

That was probably part of the reason, that... And the fact that Gellert Grindelwald was eying him with a mixture of surprise and shock. The old wizard looked positively gaunt, as if he had gone through a fast. His clothes were shredded, like he had gone through a mixer, and yet his cold blue eyes settled on him without hesitation.

"Harry? What are you doing here, kind? Isn't this the Clock-Tower?"

"I...I don't know." And for once, in his voice, Harry realized that he was indeed afraid.

Author's notes

And this is done.

Say hello to Grindelwald. He is back.

We seemingly lost Hermione. We seemingly lost Lillian. Will it hold true in the next chapter?

On another note! Since this is chapter 90, and since a lot of people told me that it is a daunting task to read these many chapters, I was thinking about 'splitting' up the story with chapter 25 of this IV book. (Making it thus a 100 chapter novel, to be continued in a 'sequel' of sorts) OR I could split it up right here.

For me it isn't any different, since the subject doesn't change, only the 'form' of expression.

I actually had difficulty deciding the ending of this chapter, because plot-bunnies suddenly filled my mind. You know when you're reading and suddenly you go 'it should be like this, think of the fun' or 'let's hype the angst' or 'let's rock' and so on...so...omake. (It is the 90th chapter after all folks worth of celebration!)

Omake:

He took a deep shuddering breath as he slowly stood up.

And then he blinked.

For he was standing in a classroom at Hogwarts, and at the professor's desk was a horrendous looking woman clad in pink.

"Mr. Potter...is there something you wish to say to the class?"

He blearily looked to his side, where Ronald Weasley was eying him worriedly. He looked for Hermione, and found her not too far away.

Why was she sporting Gryffindor colours now? And why...he looked at his own tie too, and when the crimson and gold colours were found, he nearly gagged.

Just where had he ended up?

Harry Wylt and the Path to the Crown

Chapter Sixteen

"Let me look at you, Harry."

The old Dark Lord's voice was filled with glee, as his hands gently settled on Harry's shoulders. The man's icy blue eyes peered through his own, and cackled laughter soon escaped Gellert's lips.

"Good, very good," Gellert stood up again, turning to gaze at the school of Hogwarts. "I did not expect you to last alone so long," the old wizard whispered, his arms now crossed over his chest. "There is hope then, nothing is lost."

"I...What happened? Albus said you were—" Harry whispered, slowly walking to stand by the man's side. Yes, the man had probably killed Hagrid or hid him somewhere, and he had also lied about Fluffy's state...but if Harry had to choose, Gellert Grindelwald was probably one of the few people he could come to stand up for.

In some sort of twisted reason, the man had his respect —the Stockholm syndrome type of respect probably, but still a form of respect.

"Oh? Did he claim me dead? Killed by his hand, I suppose..." the voice trailed off as the candid white head shook slightly, before Gellert's right hand went to ruffle Harry's hair.

"It's been a while since I talked to another person," Gellert's voice was a whisper. "Only the dead, the corpses and the monsters have been my companions for so long...and yet all brought me back to the beginning. It seems the entrance to the Clock-Tower is far more hidden than I thought, far more guarded."

"You knew of it?" Harry asked, his eyes widening.

"No, I did not," Gellert answered. "Only bits and pieces...but then I came here, passed through and ended up being toyed with by one of the most diabolical set of snares and traps that made the Wards at Nurmengard look like kid's work." He took a small breath, "I suppose you know what happened with the Cerberus?"

Harry just grimaced.

He slowly averted his gaze and nodded.

"You are not angry?"

"I..." Harry closed his mouth, was he angry to begin with?

What did he have to be angry about? He actually could understand the reasoning. The man had seen an unused resource and had turned it for his own benefit. Protecting the cornerstone of the fortress was important, and so he understood that. Still something else caught his mind then, and he hurried to gaze outside of the pendulum's room.

The castle's windows were lit as normal, as he peered around for any sign of something strange or different.

"I don't understand. Why?"

"What, why I shackled the Cerberus or why I hid it from you?"

"No, not that," he replied. "This...I was pushed through the veil, by Salazar Slytherin."

"What?"

He turned to look at the old Dark Lord, and widened his eyes as he realized that the man had been out of commission for a long time. He didn't know the recent events, and as such had no idea of the things that were happening around him.

"I mean, the body was that of Cornelius, but the voice and the way of speaking...it was Salazar, I'm sure of it."

Gellert's face displayed a thoughtful expression for a moment, before it returned carefully blank as he probably schooled his features.

"I see: that is an interesting piece of news as is your survival through the veil, or your reappearance here. Did something happen I wonder?"

Gellert did not doubt his words. There was no need for the man to read in his mind —nor did he detect him try.

"I killed my past self before he could free the Dementors," Harry whispered. "The head of the Wild Hunt is the Chief of the Dementors. He's King Arthur, and if he's freed, somehow Peeves manages to get his hands on my body and—"

"Calm down Harry! I'm not following you any longer," Gellert raised his right hand, silencing him before continuing.

"For now, I suggest you keep an open mind. I will make my way out of here and contact one of my associates in England. You should return to the castle and act as if nothing happened. Whatever you might find, walking through the doors of Hogwarts...know that as long as you are its rightful ruler, the castle will guard you from all evils."

"That's...not reassuring," Harry muttered. He winced as Gellert took a step forward. What did he have to be afraid of the man now? He had practically battled against death and its veil!

"Let us leave this place," Grindelwald spoke softly as he took careful steps out of the tower. "Appearances may deceive," the pendulum was now lazily swinging across the room as normal, "but this place answers to magic —no matter whom or how equipped— to send the fools throughout time and space into the world where all that is lost is found."

"Now I'm the one not following you," Harry muttered under his breath, his green eyes travelling to gaze at the gaunt looking face of the dark lord. "Then again I suppose I will need a few more days to catch my breath and try and understand just what happened."

"When you have, feel free to contact me," and with those words, both separated upon the Hogwarts' grounds.

Hermione's dead.

The thought reached him as he walked closer to the castle's doors.

Professor Graham is an older Hermione.

That too seemed to have taken that instant to settle in his brain. As he took careful steps in the entrance hall, the statue of the architect loomed in its usual corner, nothing unsettling reaching him except for the usual chatter coming from the dining hall. Albeit 'unsettling' and 'usual' were such strange terms to be used in the same thought, he couldn't help but be wary as he stepped inside.

The dining hall fell into silence as he walked in. Quietly, his eyes settled on the familiar brown haired figure of Hermione Granger, happily chatting away. The ghosts' normal floating around the room was not the only thing that puzzled him—even Binns was there, in place of Professor Graham. He took his seat, nodding numbly to the girl...girlfriend?

She was holding a thin pendant around her neck, some sort of bauble probably bought at Hogsmeade. He could feel a sort of familiar sensation filling him as he made a wry smile in her direction.

He had gifted her that pendant during their Hogsmeade visit, hadn't he?

He frowned then: when had he found the time?

Then his gaze went to the rest of the staff table and he visibly stiffened.

It wasn't his father's gaze on him—suspicious, not so strangely—or his mother's one—curious and yet at the same time frightful—it was the Headmaster's, whose beard appeared singed and the robes slightly covered in soot.

His cold icy eyes seemed able to murder, as he narrowed them upon him.

Harry had no idea why the man was seemingly angry at him to the point of nearly cracking his mask of perfect grandfather figure, but whatever it was...it had to have been quite a good thing for him or Gellert.

"Harry!" Hermione whispered excitedly next to him. "Dumbledore's leaving!"

Something in her tone was...different. He couldn't place what it was, but there was something strange. It could have been anything from a slight cold to a lack thereof of one, but he just felt...he just knew this Hermione was different. Different from his own, different from what he had grown accustomed to. One side of him knew her as familiar, as on the way to become something else, but another side saw her as a foreigner wearing his best friend's skin.

He raised an eyebrow, before making a light smile. "Really?"

He didn't know why she felt wrong, or what vibes came out wrong. It took him a moment to realize it. The girl wasn't pressing herself against his side. She wasn't grabbing his hand and clenching it. She wasn't looking at everything he did or at every move he made. Sure, she was still giving him glances...but not many. It was more like...like she was trying to refrain from looking at him but couldn't help herself.

Was there something in the pendant?

"Duke Wylt declared himself sole heir of Hogwarts yesterday, don't you remember?" Hermione murmured. "Dumbledore was fighting his wards all day to get back in his office," here the girl grinned slightly, "and he failed miserably at that."

"That the reason for the robes?" Harry actually was surprised. He had half expected the man to be dust, but apparently the wards at Hogwarts had been losing power, hadn't they?

"Yes," the brown haired girl replied. "He won't name his successor, but he doesn't have a choice. The students are actually all wondering what's going to happen."

He blinked at that bit of information, before moving his gaze to where Lillian was seated. His eyebrows furrowed. She was standing right next to Ron, gazing at him hesitantly and laughing every now and then as the boy spoke. Justin was watching the two with the same troubled look as Ginny, and both turned to stare at him before giving him a nod —as if asking permission to break them apart.

He shook his head and moved to watch Draco, who was actually staring back at him with subtle glances. The pale-blond boy nodded

to him quietly, and he returned the small nod. Tracey Davis, standing next to him, showed him a thumb-up.

Hannah Abbott and Susan Bones seemed no worse for wear, but they gave him both warm smiles. He frowned. Had he saved them too in here? How could he have done that, if there hadn't been another him? It was then that he noticed the gaze Professor Snape was sending him. The man appeared to be thrumming his fingers on the surface of the table, his dark eyes locked on his figure. He'd see the potions' master tomorrow.

At the moment, he just wanted to understand what had changed and what hadn't.

Hermione didn't talk to him again. She didn't insist on things or asked him what they were going to do. She seemed...content in simply being in his presence. He couldn't help but feel slightly torn between this strange Hermione and the past one. Maybe he was just conflicted about the lack of attentions, but he could live without them...as long as Hermione was alive, and loyal.

Was loyalty even that big of an issue?

Yes, it was.

As the dinner came to an end, he stood up and walked out in the uncomfortable silence that had meanwhile sprouted from his own nervousness in the eerily bizarre situation. He didn't need the Marauder's map to know he was being followed, as steps came clearly heard behind him. His right hand gently touched the wall of Hogwarts to his side and as he closed his eyes...he felt.

The castle hummed. It thrummed. Its stones cracked and splintered as they rearranged themselves. The stones morphed into pivots for the stairs, the stairs burst apart and reformed unseen. The portraits moved and talked, as strings of magic tied them to something far stronger —something with a beat.

The Cornerstones were the hearts of the magical wards, yet until that single moment...

How blind had he been, to not see such a power?

Like the day he had wielded Excalibur. Like the day he had held Merlin's staff. This magic, this power...

It flowed. It moved. It answered and it queried.

He let the magic go, flow back to where it came, and then he shuddered as he took a deep breath.

Hogwarts was a magical castle.

Five words could not define the amount of power, of magic, of will and intent. Five words could not easily show the true might of such a place, the true strength the very air thrummed with. A rock was a piece of stone. Hogwarts' rocks were the foundation of something more.

And tied to it with chains invisible to the naked eye was the power of the castle —a power that was bleeding, that was wounded, a power that was rebelling.

It had been corrupted, added to, morphed. The stone had cracked, it had broken.

As walls rose behind him from the very stones, his pursuers speeding up, but too late to catch up with him as he went. He began to descend with his steps taking him down, through the narrow corridors and hallways of the dungeons. He went past the paintings that now seemed filled to the brim with pictured people watching him go by.

Merlin's staff felt smugly within his hands, as he slowed down in his stride for the last meters. He descended the circular stairway, the door of stone with the basin barring him entrance.

The words he had read long ago now were keenly part of him, as his right hand slowly touched the surface.

It felt warm. It felt right. It felt familiar.

"Death in magic, and magic in death," he whispered to the door. "The blood of the founders, huh?" he remarked. "Would you answer my questions, I wonder?"

He shook his head. Here he was, talking alone before probably doing something he felt was right, but had no idea how he believed it to be.

His staff brought up spikes and thorns from its tip, and carefully his left hand moved to it. He gritted his teeth as blood dripped down from his wounded hand, falling into the basin as the magic worked its wonders. The stone door slid aside as the blood disappeared — probably absorbed by the basin.

Harry's gaze travelled through the room's features. Stairs like those of an amphitheatre led downwards to where the stone seemed chained, its cracked surface still visible.

Peeves was floating gently in the air, his face a mixture of a scowl and a relaxed expression. The room's walls were covered in a slight coating of grime, rivulets of humidity descended downwards, into small streams that formed a circle of water surrounding the cornerstone.

"So we meet, Harry," Peeves smiled. "Have you come for the Crown?" the poltergeist asked, his gaze settling on the silver circlet that stood atop the stone's surface. "Have you come to become the King of Hogwarts?"

"No," Harry breathed out. His emerald eyes took in the state of the chains —some rusty and others with their links broken— while his feet brought him closer still. "I can't say it's a pleasant thing, to see you here again...still roaming around, still alive."

"I don't understand," Peeves' voice cracked up an octave. "I'm dead."

"Can souls die now?" Harry retorted. "You know, you were right: no normal ghost can touch things."

He kind of wondered where his wand was, or where Excalibur had ended up going. He would have liked using the sword to finish this, but lacking the weapon that could cut shackles...of course. He could finish this because he didn't have the weapon. If he had, the loop would restart. He didn't know how he knew that, but then again...he had killed his past self, and that by all logic would have meant...

Had he simply jumped across the Time-Line? Had time adjusted to him to close up the festering wound the Clock-Tower had opened?

"Are you going to stab me then? Use my sword to kill me?"

"If I did that," Harry's voice took on a thoughtful voice. "I would be cutting your life, or cutting your shackles? I think we both know what you would want me to do now, wouldn't you?"

"It's not a matter of what you want to do, Harry," Peeves snarled. "It's a matter of what you have to."

The ghostly chuckled bounced through the room, as the poltergeist quietly grew in height. "For a certain time, I was in your very same position, you know? The moment you destroy a circle, you obtain a spiral that degenerates until it reaches a new equilibrium, a new stability. That is the price of those who play with Time. To lose all they tried to keep, and to end up in a new hellish world of their own creation."

"Strange, because I am currently going to win...you sure about your theory?" Harry remarked off-handed as Merlin's staff began to sprout long vines of thorns and thick green leaves.

"Yes, Wyllt, I am sure. You didn't play with Time long enough to understand...but I did," Peeves chuckled. "Oh how long did I play! From the very beginning I tried and tried...do you know what made me go mad? For so long I was mad, for so long I sought out a reason for my madness, never to find it..." his voice lowered to barely a whisper, by the end of his sentence.

Then a strong force slammed into Harry's stomach, sending him to crash against the stone stairs of the room, taking his breath away.

"Until I realized that my soul was torn and split! I was made the perfect source of magic for the castle of Hogwarts, Harry! I was butchered from infancy, torn apart so that a piece of me would forever reside within the Founders, and a piece of them...why, a piece of them would forever be within me." The ghost laughed —his voice maniacal and bloodthirsty as the loud clanks of metallic armours reached Harry's ears.

"You're calling help?" Harry's chuckle escaped the boy's lips together with a spat of crimson blood. "So you are afraid of me," he added as he wobbled back on his feet. "You know? I understand why, really."

The next slamming sensation was blocked, as Harry's hands clenched on the staff. "After all I am going to undo what centuries upon centuries of magic brought together. I am going through all of this without warning, without thought, and without even giving you a chance to parlay."

"Would you really destroy everything, Wyllt?" Arthur spoke as Peeves' form morphed into that of a tall, broad-shouldered man. His face was stern and his eyes narrow, the colour of the iris a pale black. "I control the castle. Bind your soul to the stone, like centuries ago the Founders did, and the magic will be yours, ripe to take and claim!"

"No," he shook his head. "You tried this once, what makes you think it will work again?"

"Wh...you!" Arthur's face turned into a representation of hatred pure and unbridled at those words. "You came back! You—"

"You played with time, Arthur," Harry snarled as he took another step. "I learned the lesson now: Time is not something to be trifled with. Time is not something you can change, not something you wish to guide or drive. Time must be left free to go!"

"You could claim the Crown of Hogwarts!"

"You're lying through your teeth Arthur! That's no crown! It's nothing more than a Horcrux, slammed into the Room of Requirements by Voldemort himself! I found that out soon enough! My mind was too strong for you to conquer alone, you needed help!" another step and the stone grew closer.

"Ignorant fool!" Arthur snarled. "There will be no Room of Requirements any longer, if you destroy the Cornerstone!"

"Don't lie to me again, Arthur!" Harry retorted. "Destroying the stone would just free you! The magic is in the blood and the soul, not in a stone taken from a quarry!"

"Stop! Stop it! I command you to stop!" Arthur screamed as he slammed his hands against Merlin's staff, both beginning to fizzle and sizzle as the wood grew warmer by the second. "I will not be bound again! I have earned my freedom! Too long! Haven't I suffered enough to be shackled again!?"

"I would have taken pity, once more, long ago," Harry pointed out. "Now? Now no longer," his grip on the staff strengthened, as he pushed his entire body forward, tackling and slamming the lower tip of the staff into Peeves' knee, before swinging it like a club against the poltergeist's stomach. The hit connected, as the scattered and split soul of Arthur Pendragon was thrown against the Cornerstone.

Vines and thorns began to sprout from the point of contact, growing and festering upon the stone.

"You don't know what you're doing! Power always asks for a sacrifice! I did what had to be done! You don't understand, you cannot understand! There wasn't another way! Is it wrong to be free?" Arthur's voice was now cracking, as more and more green tendrils sprouted, chaining and shackling his ethereal form to the stone like a sacrificial lamb. "You can't understand an eternity of prison! An eternity of pointy shackles that harm and torture you every day and every hour! You cannot understand pain and suffering!"

Harry stilled, for merely a moment.

"I cannot understand?" he whispered then, his voice thick and filled with rage. "I cannot understand!?" he roared taking another step forward as he slammed the point of Merlin's staff against Peeves' chest. Arthur screamed, as the staff broke through the transparent chest while a silvery substance began to emerge from the cracks and the wounds the thorns had brought forth on the ghost's skin.

"One does not become a King because he wishes to! One does not become a revolutionary because he screams that near a statue! One does not earn a crown by right of blood or magic! It is by working hard, by fighting with all you have! It is by screaming against the reaper's scythe, by clawing every inch towards victory, that a true King is born! One who leads and does not command! One who is first in battle, and last to leave! That is a true King! One who

protects, one who is there for his people and his friends, not one who rules blinded by power!"

"They wouldn't listen!" Arthur screamed back. "Merlin ensnared me with pretty promises! Morgana broke my heart! I was the only one who could do something! I was the only one who could act! The only one who could find the Graal! The only one who could wield Excalibur! The only one who could rule England! I was meant to be the only one! And then I discovered I wasn't! All that was asked of me could have been done by another! And that other would take the benefits!? I refused! I didn't want to! This is my castle! This is my power, this is my magic! You will not take it!"

"I don't want it," Harry whispered, his eyes soft as he twisted the staff's tip into the wound of Arthur. "I do not need it," he added calmly. "All that I wished for was a normal life," he chuckled grimly. The longing eyes hidden behind Arthur's pain told the boy all he had to know. "Like you did too, long ago...but you couldn't have it, could you? That is why we are the same, you and I. Meddling old wizards, troubling heart problems and a destiny greater than us that calls for our actions. One can never ignore the prophecies, you know?"

"What are you blabbering about now?" Arthur snarled, trying to fight off his shackles, only for them to tighten even further.

"What I'm saying, Arthur," he calmly whispered. "Is that everything must come to an end. You have done well, Arthur, you have fought well, you have united Great Britain and ruled it fairly...but your time has come. Let it go."

And then the thorns grew and emerged from the very essence of Arthur's soul, splintering apart behind him, towards the stone.

"How?" Arthur whispered, in his last moments.

"Close your eyes," Harry replied, "and exhale."

"You don't understand...and probably, you never will," Arthur chuckled before erupting into a maddening laughter. "Go on then! KILL ME, WYLLT! Kill what holds everything aloft! Kill what prevents the destruction of your world! But be warned, be warned!" he snarled. "Beyond this point, whatever happens...will be your fault and yours alone...not mine," he exhaled then, his laughter dying out.

"I suppose..." he murmured. "Eventually...this time...among the others...was meant to be," a grim chuckle once more escaped his ghostly lips. "It doesn't even hurt... the death of a soul...but remember my words, Harry, remember them! They will come! And they will tear you apart! Not because you freed or killed me, but because you have taken away what was theirs! I was no more than a guardian, Harry...no more than a pawn. Look beyond the Kings and the Queens Harry...and once you do that, remember that the hands...the hands are not on the chess table!"

The next moment, Harry Wyllt dropped the staff of Merlin as it burned fiercely, scorching his very palms. The staff cracked and split—splinters of wood becoming veritable thick troves of bushes and thorns, while vines flailed around the room as the entire floor seemed to pulse a thrumming rhythm.

Harry held his chest wincing, his heart beating slowly as he suddenly felt as if a dagger had been plunged into his heart. There was no blood, but he could understand. Piece after piece the Cornerstone began to crumble, the silent cries of a broken soul echoing in despair throughout the room. The links that tied the chains together broke and snapped, the noise echoing into a cacophony as thick wooden trunks seemed to grow out of the once small staff.

His left hand still bleeding, both his palms paining from the burns, Harry took a step back, and then another.

The thorns turned black with their thickness and their length increasing, while their tips began to drip crimson droplets of blood. A heavy atmosphere settled in the room, as a rotten taste filled Harry's tongue and palate. He began to climb the stairs backwards, as he could hear the clanking of the armours grow in strength.

Seconds later, the door of the room burst open as the entirety of the armoury plunged through to enter the fray, their two handed swords slamming down against the ever growing grove and greenery. They seemed to be ignoring Harry, and that suited him just fine as he made his way towards the exit.

The thorns punctured through the armours, the vines now grown to resemble the Devil's Snare ones as they slammed down upon the

small complement of empty suits —completely breaking them apart as it kept on growing.

A pulse of magic departed as a loud crack echoed within the room.

Harry ran.

His breathing hitched as he stumbled out of the room and through the circular stairway into the corridors, as the floor and walls of the dungeons seemed to expand and enlarge, growing together with the rest of the castle as the magic that had held the wards came loose.

He hadn't killed Peeves.

He hadn't destroyed the Cornerstone.

He had bound everything with Merlin's staff together, and then had let the staff feed upon the magic of the stone, for that was the purpose of the staff: to bind, to absorb, and to grow.

Centuries of corrupted magic, centuries of horrible rituals that made a soul mad through pain, and delivered that pain as energy for the wards came loose within mere minutes, crumbling the alterations to the normal castle's form as empty classrooms appeared and halls enlarged all around him.

The castle returned to its former decadent glory as rooms deemed unneeded reappeared at the same time as the stairs moved away within the walls, to build themselves where they were meant to be and still there forever —the magic that made them move gone. The pictured figures froze in the positions they had been painted, their gazes vitreous and their appearances now muggle and no longer alive.

The ghosts howled as they departed, the chains shackling them to the castle itself coming away —freedom within their grasp at last.

And as Harry Potter swatted away the sweat from his forehead, his eyes met with those of Henry Slytherin and Helena Ravenclaw, both smiling at him.

"I held little hope this would succeed," Henry remarked. "I must admit however, I was wrong: I am proud to call you my heir, Harry."

"Be careful now, child," Helena added then. "We are free, and we will depart...too long have we delayed," she wistfully admitted. "Too long our souls suffered to create that which grants eternal life, atop the Clock-Tower, fed by the magic, the blood and the soul," her face turned grim. "Those who claimed the produce however, they are still at large...I warn you, Harry...never forget what you have learned."

"What? What are you talking about?"

"There was no choice," Henry answered. "Peeves might have been a psychopathic entity, maddened by the pain that withholding the wards up would produce, but he still held something at bay, something far worse."

"For centuries we debated between our freedom and the safety of the Wizards," Helena murmured. "But time...time in the end grew too heavy for us to hold," she added. "We are sorry, Harry. We helped you, we trained you, we forced the hand of fate to withhold you the bundle of prophecies you are hereby living through...because you will need their help, Harry." The ghost softly floated near him, her right hand stopping inches away from his cheek. "You will need all the help you can get for what is to come."

"Why?" he whispered. "What did you do to me?"

"To us, it wouldn't have mattered," Henry replied calmly. "Whether Peeves or you had come out of that room freed. For us, it would have meant the same: freedom."

Something, within Harry, died with those words. Something he hadn't thought possible would die was gone, disappeared without a trace as his chest constricted even more from a pain that didn't come from his wounds or his bleeding hands.

Again...again he could not.

He couldn't.

This wasn't true.

They couldn't be telling the truth.

Liars that they were, that couldn't be the truth!

"We knew you needed to be weakened long enough for Voldemort's shard within you to take over," Henry whispered. "Admittedly, we held hopes that Voldemort would manage, but once the prophecies against the Dark Lord piled up...there was no choice but to discard him in your favour. A saviour of the world would have had far more chances than a Dark Lord now, right?"

"We're sorry," Helena added again. "There just wasn't another way."

"Against what?" he choked out. "What else is there? What hides!? What do I have to fight once more!?"

"Voldemort, for one," Henry remarked. "The sins of the Founders' past then," the ghost of Slytherin added as an afterthought. "And finally, what Atlantis itself hid...for fear."

Their ethereal features turned bright, as their essence decomposed in front of him.

"You haven't answered me!" Harry snarled. "I want answers!" he yelled, bailing his fists. The ground clattered and broke as Harry lifted his right hand. Hatred and fury poured through his mind as he screamed.

"TRUDO!"

The lances scattered as a volley launched by a thousand men, their consistency that of steel. His eyes shone with ferocity and unyielding wrath. The spell passed straight through the ghosts, flying beyond their shining etherealness...

And then the lance landed with a sickening squelch upon two bodies which were standing right behind the ghosts.

Blood began to pool down on the floor, crimson and tainting the ground, as his parents lay there pierced by wounds he had caused them.

He felt his soul being snapped in half, torn asunder and cracked. He didn't know why, but he felt he held the knowledge within himself to place a bit of himself elsewhere, into another object, into his own

cloak if he so willed. He could place it on the stone of the floor, he could use a now still painting, he could do anything...

He could...

Would you kill your parents for power?

Would he?

He had, hadn't he?

No, he hadn't.

He could still save them.

Call a nurse, cauterize their wounds. He could save them, but if he did...

How much had they heard?

Had they heard enough? Had they heard all? Had they heard Henry calling him Wyllt?

Why were they there to begin with!?

Had they been worried, about him? Maybe with the chaos they had looked for him. Maybe they had tried following him.

Maybe they had wanted to talk to him.

His mother had suspected he was Wyllt, hadn't she?

How was he going to...

He didn't have the time for that.

He had to choose.

Even the betrayal of the ghosts was lessened in front of this. He had to choose...and he had to do so quickly.

He would have torn his own hair apart...why was it always him!?

Author's notes

Cliff.

Hanger.

Ba-Dum

Seems people don't like long explanations in the Author's notes.

Well, hope you enjoyed this particular chapter.

Of course...the Hat is always the big-bad evil guy, didn't you know it?

Chp92